# THE TYRANNY OF FAITH

CARL JOUBERT

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# THE TYRANNY OF FAITH

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*A STORY OF COURLAND*

BY

CARL JOUBERT

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"Russia as It Really Is," "The Truth about the Tsar,"
"The White Hand."

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# THE TYRANNY OF FAITH.

## CHAPTER I.

### JELGAVA.

A STRETCH of sandy plain reaching up from the Baltic broken by tufted dunes and bleak patches of moorland; falling anon to sedgy morasses and stagnant lakes, the shores fringed with reeds and stunted alders, and over the still surface of whose waters flights of wild ducks and geese skim to the sheltering osier beds, or drop with rippling splash amongst the rushes. Then sweeping gently upwards the plain is clothed with forests of pine, at first dwarfed and deformed with poor, twisted stems and ragged branches, but anon rising with stately trunks six fathoms from the ground and breaking into a canopy of verdure overhead. Clear of the forests are lowly villages surrounded by half-starved fields and barren meadows, where meagre kine and flocks crop the unnutritious growth that clothes them fitfully. Here, too, man has made a slovenly attempt to cultivate the land, the light, friable soil has been turned by the plough and a scattering of grain is sown in the sandy furrows; but it is a half-

hearted effort, and Nature lends but little encouragement to the cultivator. Beyond, the prospect lapses once again to forests, lakes and marshes; but, with a final effort, rises to a few small hills on the horizon. In the lap of the hills lies Jelgava, the capital of the Duchy of Courland.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century there was little to distinguish Jelgava from the other towns in the Baltic Provinces. It was a town of wooden houses painted in gaudy colours. Some of the streets were narrow and tortuous; others were broad and regular, with spacious gardens behind the houses. There were churches of various denominations—for the Greek Church had many rivals in this Western province, where the Letts and Germans and Jews outnumbered the Russians by twenty to one. There was an extensive market place, where every summer a fair was held, lasting for six weeks; but which, in the winter, was occupied principally by the sellers of firewood, who brought their sleigh loads of birch and fir to sell to the burghers of the town; for coal was only used by the richest of the inhabitants of Jelgava and by the official classes. Round the market place were some of the principal buildings: the theatre, which also served as an opera house and concert hall; the principal hotel; the prison and barracks on the right side, and the City Hall. The River Aa flows sluggishly through the town, its waters encroaching upon the low-lying plain and meandering back to the main stream have formed an island, on which the old Dukes of Courland erected their Schloss in the fourteenth century. Marshal Biren, the favourite of the Empress Anne, built his palace on the old site in the

eighteenth century. This palace is now the seat of the State Governor of Courland. A mill-race and an old water-wheel, some tile works, a tanyard and a soap manufactory represent the industries of Jelgava, but her trade is insignificant. Rafts of timber are floated into the town from the forests higher up the river by the sturdy *strugovtchiks*, singing quaint folk-songs as they steer their cumbrous craft to the wharf. Beyond this material for building houses little is imported into the town; and her exports are limited to tiles, leather and soap.

The busiest house in Jelgava was situated in Marien Street. It was a large, two-storied wooden building, the ground floor painted green and the upper storey a rich brown. A balcony surrounded the upper storey, and on the side facing the street it was decorated with a profusion of plants and flowers. The house had an air of prosperity, the paint was fresh and the boards which formed the walls were sound and well laid. The whole of the ground floor was occupied by offices, where clerks, pen in hand, bent over large ledgers, making entries from slips of paper which from time to time were handed in by soldiers in loose *shinells* and slovenly uniforms.

On the left of the house large double gates gave entrance to the courtyard behind. All day long the gates stood open, and military waggons passed in empty from the streets, to emerge again presently loaded with provisions; whilst a soldier, stationed at the gate, checked off the contents of each cart as it went out.

The scene in the courtyard resembled a country fair. Against the walls lean-to sheds had been

erected which ran the whole length of three sides of the square. These sheds were divided into sections, and each section was piled high with stores. Here were trunks of small birch-trees ready to be cut up into firewood; here sacks of coarse flour; carcases of lean bullocks, sacks of potatoes, baskets of cabbages, all had their allotted partitions. Soldiers in shabby undress hurried hither and thither, receiving from the storekeepers the rations for their regiments, dumping them down on the weighing machines in the courtyard, and finally shouldering them off to the waggons. Squabbling, fighting, stealing when an opportunity presented itself for slipping a few potatoes or a plug of tobacco into the pockets of their *shinells*, the men of the various regiments sweated over their task. Only when the uproar became unbearable did the sergeants or quartermasters interfere, and with a savage blow or kick at the nearest offender restore order in the group who struggled for possession of the goods in the stores of the *podratchik* (contractor).

Jacov Serkovski stood in the middle of his courtyard and superintended the issue of rations to the garrison of Jelgava. He was a man of about sixty, tall and upright. A patriarchal grey beard descended half-way to his waist, and above it a long aquiline nose, close-set keen eyes and a puckered brow gave him the aspect of a hard man of business. As he stood there looking after the distribution of his goods and counting up the profit on each waggon load of stores as it left his yard he could truthfully be reckoned a hard man, for every kopek that was due to him for goods supplied, he would demand from the Government, and on no point would he give way until

his just demands were satisfied. But keen as were the eyes of Jacov Serkovski, *podratchik* of Jelgava, they never appeared to see the small peculations of the soldiers which went on under their very gaze, nor did he question the suspicious bulges in the pockets of the men who marched out of the gates behind the ladened waggons. And when a luckless soldier who had received a violent kick in the stomach from his superior officer in one of the little frays which occurred frequently round the weighing machines, came reeling towards him, retching and clasping his hands over his belly in agony, the eyes of Jacov Serkovski softened and he went forward to his assistance. For Jacov Serkovski had himself served in the army of the Tsar of Russia, and beneath the long coat and shirt which covered his back there were still visible angry red scars, cut criss-cross on his shoulders and loins, which had been placed there by order of Nicholas I. as aids to conversion from the ancient faith of his fathers to the true religion of the Holy Greek Church. But the knout had descended in vain on the flesh of Jacov; he had entered the army a Jew, and a Jew he remained to the end of the chapter.

At the age of nineteen Jacov Serkovski had been caught by an *Isborstchik* whose duty it was to impress young Jews for the service of the Tsar. Jacov lived in Bielostok at the time of his capture, but he was sent to serve in Courland. The *polkovnik* of his regiment was almost as zealous as Nicholas I. for the conversion of the Jews, and once a month Jacov would hear his name called by the corporal in charge of his section, and he would be asked whether he were willing to kiss the cross. Serkovski always stubbornly declined, and

the result was a flogging at the hands of his comrades who liked and respected him, but who acted under orders which were not to be disobeyed. Never was there a more recalcitrant heretic than Jacov Serkovski; but he was a good soldier and an educated man. These qualities presently came to be recognised by his superiors. A new commanding officer was appointed to the regiment who cared nothing for religion, but who had an eye for a good man. Jacov's persecutions ceased, and were soon turned to promotion. He left the regiment, after twelve years' service, with a character for integrity and strength of purpose which secured for him the appointment of *podratchik* to the garrison of Jelgava from the Governor-General of Courland. For thirty years he had held the position, and had amassed a considerable fortune in his business, gaining the goodwill of all classes, from the private soldier to the Governor-General, so that he was known in Jelgava as "Nash Jacov" (Our Jacob).

As a civilian, under the more tolerant reign of Alexander II. Jacov and his people enjoyed immunity from persecution. In Courland, where the inhabitants were of many nationalities and where the languages spoken embraced Russian, Chacholl, Lettish, Lithuanian and Yiddish; and where the religious convictions of the people ranged over the doctrines of Luther, the Reformed Church, the Greek Church, and many other denominations of Christians, and the Jewish faith, a broad tolerance for the honest convictions of all men existed. Russians, Letts, Germans and Jews lived in peace and mutual goodwill together, and respected the prejudices of their neighbours.

The intolerance of the Greek Church was swamped in the diversity of other beliefs, and there was no one strong enough to force the doctrines of the Holy Synod on the masses of the people.

Politically, Courland enjoyed privileges of her own. Joined to the Russian Empire at her own request, she had been granted all the rights conferred by her former constitution, together with any benefits which may accrue from the union of a comparatively free state with an iron-bound autocracy. The Tsar is still the "Duke of Courland"—but the distinction is now not worth mentioning. But the fact remains that, in the reign of Alexander II. the various nationalities which go to make up the population of the Duchy of Courland, lived together on terms of good understanding; and Jacov Serkovski, the Jew, was known and respected throughout the length and breadth of the province equally with the State Governor in his Schloss on the island of the Aa.

The last waggon-load of stores rumbled out of the yard accompanied by the fatigue party of the 21st Regiment. The storekeepers began to close the doors of the sheds and to clear up the *débris* in the yard. Serkovski was on the point of entering the counting-house when he heard his name called. He turned back to the yard and was confronted by Basil Struganoff, quartermaster of the 21st Regiment.

"May I have a word with you, Gospodin Serkovski?" he asked confidentially.

"Well?" said Jacov. He disliked Struganoff instinctively, though he had hitherto had very few dealings with him; for Struganoff had only lately been appointed quartermaster to his regiment.

"You have served in the army yourself, Gospodin, and therefore you know how miserable is the pittance that the Government pays to us poor officers, and how impossible it is for us to live upon it in the position of gentlemen."

"You forget that I served in the ranks," Jacov answered, "where I had nothing to do with the difficulties of the officers."

"But even as a private soldier you must have known that the officers cannot live upon their pay alone."

"It is quite possible. But I should be obliged if you would come to the point."

For a moment Struganoff did not reply. He had thought it necessary to lead up gently to the proposition which he had to make to the *podratchik*, and Jacov's abrupt manner disconcerted him.

"Well, then," he said at last, "I have been thinking of a plan which would work out to our mutual advantage. I know that the margin of profit which you make on your stores amounts to scarcely anything——"

"You need not trouble about my business," Jacov broke in. "I can look after myself, thank God. What is it that you want?"

"Let us be reasonable, Gospodin Serkovski," the quartermaster expostulated. "If I have a plan which will increase your profits whilst it also benefits me, I can't see why you need object."

Jacov Serkovski's eyes glinted ominously. He knew well what Struganoff was about to propose; other quartermasters had made the same advances to him, but never more than once.

"I have raised no objections," he answered, "I merely suggested that you should come to the point at once."

Struganoff gained courage from the reply of the *podratchik* and continued:

"I have been thinking that there is very little difference between a hundred poods of flour and ninety-five; and the same applies to rice, potatoes and everything else. No one would feel the difference of the five poods; but divided between you and me it would come to a nice little sum every month. It is very easily arranged."

"Then you would defraud the Government, let alone the men of your regiment?" said Jacov, restraining his indignation with difficulty.

"What do I care for the *Natzarskie Kaznatchai!*" Struganoff exclaimed bitterly. "Does the Little Father pay us so well that we should refuse to help ourselves when an opportunity offers? It is well known, Gospodin Serkovski, that we are expected to supplement our starvation pay when and how we can. The Tsar knows that we cannot live upon it."

"Then, my friend, you must find some other means to supplement your pay. And I give you warning, that if ever I hear a word more from you on this subject, or if I find that you are tampering with the rations of your regiment, I shall report the circumstances to the Polkovnik, and ask him to appoint another quartermaster to come to my stores for the rations."

Serkovski turned abruptly and went towards the office. Wrath and indignation were in his heart that any man should dare to insult him with such a pro-

position. But his long experience as *podratchik* had given him an insight into the avarice of human nature. It was by no means the first time that he had been solicited to defraud the Government and the unfortunate soldiery; but each fresh attempt on his integrity served but to incense him the more.

Jacov Serkovski was a Jew with all the characteristics of his race. The accumulation of wealth was almost a passion with him; but it must be honestly acquired. The letter of the Law, and the dots and crotchets of a contract delighted him; but he would never enforce them against a necessitous litigant. He thoroughly endorsed the action of the patriarch after whom he was named, in insisting on the bargain which he had made with his brother, to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, being carried out to the letter; but in his heart he disapproved of the means by which Jacob secured the fulfilment of the contract. He gave honour to those in authority, and alms to the necessitous lavishly. He reverenced the Law and the Prophets; but he worshipped God with his whole heart.

Basil Struganoff watched him enter the house, and shook his fist after him.

"You diseased Jew!" he muttered. "You son of a dog! So you will tell the Polkovnik that his quartermaster is a rogue?"

But in his heart Struganoff felt that Serkovski would keep his word if he approached the subject again, or if Jacov had any cause of complaint against him, and his courage evaporated. Henceforth he knew that he must fear Jacov Serkovski, for the *podratchik* held his reputation in his hands. The

thought of it made him hate the man; and he left the yard with a sinister expression on his sallow features. Clear of the premises of Serkovski and in the broad street, confidence in himself returned.

"These cursed Jews have got above themselves in Jelgava!" he exclaimed, spitting contemptuously on the roadway. "It is time that they had a lesson. The good Tsar Nicholas would soon have made 'Nash Jacov' sing to a different tune."

He quite overlooked the fact that the good Tsar Nicholas had tried and failed.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ROSE OF SHARON.

MIRIAM SERKOVSKI dropped her right arm with the bow held lightly between her tapered fingers, and uttered an exclamation of disgust:

"I shall never be able to play that passage properly! And I am only making an exhibition of myself by attempting it before you, Gospodin Antacolski. Shut the piano, Fräulein, and come away. I am not going to play any more in the presence of Gospodin Antacolski."

She returned the violin to its case; and the young man came to assist her, expostulating mildly at the abrupt termination of the performance. He himself had a world-wide reputation as a violinist. Paris raved about him, Berlin, Vienna and London showed their appreciation in accordance with their varying temperaments. Eric Antacolski was famous; but his origin was humble. He was a Jew from Vilna, who had studied music at the Berlin Conservatoire. In appearance he was not prepossessing, short and very dark, with fat, pendulous cheeks, and heavy Hebrew features. But when he played the soul of

the man appeared in his eyes, and an indefinable air of dignity took possession of his whole personality. He was transformed by his genius; and something of this transformation was apparent in him when he went across to help Miriam Serkovski put away her violin.

Whilst she had been playing he had sat gazing at her lovely head, with the little rounded chin resting on the pad of her instrument. The dark, wavy hair, the olive skin, the flashing eyes with just a shadow of anxiety in them as she approached the difficult passages, dying down to dreamy repose when she lost all self-consciousness in pure enjoyment of the melody, the tall slight, swaying figure, the graceful pose, and the free sweep of her right arm—these were the charms that had wrought the transformation in Eric Antacolski, and not the music, though Miriam played well.

She was only seventeen, not yet free from the dominion of Fräulein Erard, whom her father had engaged as her governess on the death of his wife four years before. But though she still studied foreign languages and music under a governess, she was in sole charge of her father's household, kept the accounts, managed the servants, and catered for the clerks in the office, who had all their meals in the house.

It was through Fräulein Erard that the Serkovskis became acquainted with Antacolski. She had been a fellow student at the Conservatoire with him; and when he returned to his native town, after a triumphant tour of Europe, she easily persuaded Jacov Serkovski to invite Antacolski to stay at his house

for the concert which he was to give in Jelgava on Easter Monday.

Fräulein Erard was devoted to her pupil, and being a true daughter of Eve, she was already scheming in her honest mind to find a suitable husband for her. During the four years which she had spent in the Serkovskis' house she had acquired a good knowledge of the ideals and customs of the Hebrew race. She knew with what dismay Jewish parents regard an unmarried daughter who has passed her first youth, and though there was little chance of the beautiful Miriam Serkovski being neglected by the men of Israel, she was determined that only the very best of them should be admitted as suitors to her hand. So that when she pressed Gospodin Serkovski to invite the celebrated violinist to the house, it was not altogether without an ulterior motive. Judging from the expression in Antacolski's face as he criticised the lines of Miriam's Amati, she concluded that, on his side at least, her scheme was not without an element of success.

Jacov Serkovski came in from his duties in the courtyard. His dark eyes still gleamed angrily at the recollection of the insult which Struganoff had offered him; but they softened at the sight of his daughter. The *samovar* and tea things were brought in, and the little party was soon seated round the table with Miriam presiding over the *samovar*. Jacov engaged Antacolski in conversation; he was delighted with the young man, and proud to be the host of a genius of his own race. But their conversation was soon interrupted by the arrival of another visitor. The newcomer was General Bulvanoff, *Glavnie natchalnik*

of the neighbouring town Bausk, an old friend of the Serkovskis. "Nash Jacov" had many friends among the Russian officials, for in Jelgava it was reckoned no disgrace to claim friendship with the Jews; but General Bulvanoff was the most intimate of all. He advanced straight to the head of the table where Miriam was seated, and taking her hand with a gallant bow, kissed the back of it.

"How is our Rose of Sharon?"

Miriam looked up into his face with a friendly smile.

"Free from thorns at present, thank you, General."

The old man looked at her admiringly.

"Yes, yes," he said, "a rose free from thorns and just bursting into bloom. What could be more beautiful?"

Then he saluted Fräulein Erard and Jacov, and was introduced to Eric Antacolski, and for some time the conversation was general. Then Miriam and Fräulein Erard withdrew, leaving the men alone. The eyes of all three of them followed Miriam to the door. Each had his own particular thoughts of the tall, beautiful girl as she left the room—Antacolski's were unexpressed. The old General muttered:

"What a lovely woman she will make! I wish she were my daughter!"

Jacov caught the General's words, and in reply his thoughts, too, found expression.

"Would that her mother could see her now!" and then, as an afterthought, "perhaps she does—yes, I think she does."

Not one of them gave a thought to poor Fräulein Erard; and yet she looked wistfully back at Antacol-

ski. She also had her thoughts; but, like the violinist, she kept them to herself. Perhaps she remembered the days when they were students together in Berlin, when for a few delicious months she had allowed herself to be carried away by a vain hope. It was over and done with, of course, five years ago; and she was now an old woman of thirty-three and very plain. But Miriam was worthy of him.

Left to themselves, the three men conversed on many subjects. The General had not been in Jelgava for some months, and he was anxious to hear from Jacov all the latest news of the capital and of his acquaintances there.

"There have been some changes of late," said Serkovski. "The new bishop of your church has arrived within the last week. I understand that he is a very great man, a member of the Synod, and a favourite in St. Petersburg."

The General yawned. Church matters had no great attraction for him. So long as he was left in peace in his command he cared not one rap who might be the Bishop of Courland. The late prelate had been an unassuming old man who interfered with nobody, and the General had no apprehensions regarding his successor. The insignificance in numbers of the Orthodox Church in the province, and the vast preponderance of Dissenters, Lutherans, Catholics and Jews, had rendered the grip of the Holy Synod almost powerless in Courland. Though, of necessity, General Bulvanoff belonged to the Orthodox Greek Church, he set but little store by her doctrines. There was an icon in the corner of his room it is true, but the General rarely looked at it, and never crossed

himself before it. He regarded the Church as a vast money-making corporation, of which the members of the Holy Synod were the managing directors, and the clergy shareholders. They dispensed salvation and remission of sins to their customers at exorbitant rates, and advertised the business largely with expensive posters of the saints painted in oils and coated with gold, silver and precious stones, and by weekly performances in the churches, to which no admission fee was charged but towards the cost of which all were invited to contribute, in addition to being taxed for their maintenance. Such were the views of General Bulvanoff, but he discreetly kept them to himself. He felt, however, that some reply was due to Serkovski.

"It astonishes me that a bishop so distinguished as Zolotnikoff should have been appointed to Courland," he said. "The Orthodox Church has but few members in the whole countryside. I have in my command at Bausk soldiers of no less than eight-and-twenty different religions, and each creed lays claim to the only road to salvation. There are *Staraver, Popovtzi, Nemoliaki, Ne Nashi, Vozdykhateli, Molokaia, Skoptsi,* and a score more, besides a very large number of your own creed."

"May they all continue to live in peace and brotherly love together!" said Jacov, with a note of misgiving in his voice. He knew only too well the persecutions to which his people were subjected in other governments in Russia, and he regarded with apprehension the appointment of a distinguished member of the Holy Synod to the bishopric of Courland.

"I will say 'Amen' to that, my friend," the General

answered. "But tell me about my friends in Jelgava. I hear that Baron von Belaieff's son has left the army and returned home."

"I am not acquainted with the Baron except in his official capacity," Serkovski answered. "But I have heard that his son is to study medicine."

The Belaieff family was one of the few in Jelgava who socially held aloof from the Jews, a fact which the General had forgotten when he enquired after the movements of young Yuri von Belaieff. The old Baron, who was Politzmaister of Jelgava, came of a good family of German extraction, and inherited from his Teutonic forbears the exaggerated pride of race which characterises the German nation. He bore no ill-will against the Jews on account of their religion; he simply regarded them as his social inferiors, altogether overlooking the fact that many of them could trace their pedigree back to a period long before the German nation existed, either as a whole or as a medley of insignificant principalities.

Yuri von Belaieff was the only child of the Politzmaister. He had been a student at both the Real School and the Gymnasium in Jelgava, and had then gone to the Military College in St. Petersburg, and so into the army. After a period of only six months' service as an officer, Yuri Belaieff resigned his commission and returned home. The incident had given rise to a good deal of gossip in Jelgava, and all sorts of stories were afloat to account for his sudden retirement from the service. It is hardly necessary to state that all these rumours were of an uncharitable nature and wide of the truth. The real facts were only known to Yuri and his father and to the officers of

the regiment to which Yuri belonged, and they were altogether to the young man's credit. He had found himself in a community entirely distasteful to him, in which the low standard of duty appalled him; and, further, that he was expected to conform to the standard. It was a rude awakening to Yuri, who, as a boy, had looked upon the profession of arms as the golden highway to glory, along which chivalrous knights passed from one adventure to another. But he was not faint-hearted. He struggled on in his own way, meeting with derision and reproof at every turn, until one day he was ordered by the captain of his *rota* to do something which he considered dishonourable. He flatly refused, and the matter was brought before the *polkovnik*.

The *polkovnik* was in a dilemma. The order which Yuri had refused to obey was one that was given frequently by captains to their subalterns, and as frequently complied with; but for all that, it was not an order that would stand a moment's investigation from the point of view of moral rectitude. If he punished Yuri for disobedience of orders the whole facts would have to be reported to the general. If he declined to punish him, he felt that he would be undermining the discipline of his regiment. In this difficulty he wrote to the boy's father, advising him to withdraw Yuri from the service, as he was evidently unsuited for a military career.

Baron von Belaieff went at once to St. Petersburg, where the regiment was quartered, and had a long interview with his son. Yuri poured out to his father the whole story of his struggle against the existing state of affairs in the regiment, and the hopelessness

of his efforts to reconcile his conscientious scruples with the orders which he received. The Baron saw that there was nothing for it but to act on the advice of the *polkovnik*, and Yuri accordingly resigned his commission.

General Bulvanoff had heard something of the unfavourable rumours concerning Yuri von Belaieff which were afloat, and, as an old friend of the *politzmaister*, he was anxious to learn the truth before going to his house; but evidently Jacov Serkovski knew nothing of the affair, and he had committed a *faux pas* in speaking to him of the Belaieffs. He adroitly turned the conversation to other topics which brought Antacolski into the discussion.

Miriam and Fräulein Erard returned from their walk before the General took his departure. Miriam had a large bunch of spring flowers in her hands which they had gathered in the *Schlossgarten*. She selected a few blossoms from the bouquet, and stooping over the old General, pinned them into the buttonhole of the great-coat which he wore.

"Those are for you, General," she said, smiling into his rugged face; "and you must take the rest to Her Excellency, your wife. I know she loves flowers."

She was wrapping a sheet of white paper round the bouquet for the General to carry, when Antacolski came up to her.

"May I not have one, too?" he asked with deference.

Miriam pulled a lily of the valley out of the bunch, and gave it to him with a smile which was very like the one she had bestowed upon the old General, perfectly frank and with no shadow of embarrassment.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BISHOP OF COURLAND.

ALEXIS ZOLOTNIKOFF, Bishop of Courland, was uneasy in his mind. He stood at the great window of the library in his palace in Katharinen Street and looked out upon the spacious garden with the fountains playing in the middle of the lawn. The water, thrown up in a thousand jets, formed fantastic spray pictures in the air, ever dissolving in shimmering mist, and reconstructing themselves into the same figures ere the dissolution was complete. In the centre of the fountain stood a marble statue of Minerva, and on either side two sculptured swans with wings outstretched.

The eyes of the bishop were riveted on the fountain, but his thoughts were far away. That they troubled him was obvious from the wrinkles in his brow and the impatient expression in his dark eyes; but still he gazed at the fountain and the group of statuary, until the realisation of his immediate surroundings overcame the anticipation of the future.

"Who ever heard of Minerva and swans?" he muttered. "They should have been owls."

Then a different aspect of the possibilities of the fountain presented itself to his mind, and a sleek, sensuous expression stole over his face.

"The swans are right. It is Minerva that is out of place. Why not a soft, naked, unresisting Leda? What a group it would have made! These artists always fall short of the sublime. Minerva where he might have made Leda! Swans where he ought to have made owls!"

He turned from the window and began to pace up and down the library with his eyes riveted on the carpet. Leda and Minerva were banished from his mind, and he was face to face once more with the cause of his anxiety.

"Herz, Herz," he repeated. "It must be the same man, Daniel Herz."

He stopped at last beneath a magnificent gold-encrusted icon which hung in the corner of the room, and gazed up at it. It was a picture of the Virgin which looked out from the jewelled halo. The face was very beautiful, but it was not the face of a pure woman; the eyes were dreamy and sensual, the curve of the large mouth was voluptuous, and the golden vestments, which usually conceal all but the face and hands of the picture, left bare her right shoulder and breast, which the artist had painted in glowing flesh tints and rounded maturity. A little golden lamp burned in front of the icon, and the flickering light cast shadows over the picture, imparting a life-like tremor to the skin. The bishop did not cross himself before her, but the same expression came into his

eyes as when he contemplated the substitution of Leda for Minerva on the fountain; they seemed to feast themselves upon the charms of the woman in the picture. And when at last he spoke, it was not a prayer that he breathed passionately, but the two words:

"*Moia doushenka!*" (My darling!)

The career of Alexis Zolotnikoff had been strange and eventful. He himself knew very little of his infancy and early childhood. His father he could not remember, and his mother died when he was seven years old. They lived in a village near Vilna, and they were very poor. When his mother died he was adopted by a poor Jew, who kept a few horses and a *droshki.* The poor *isvostchik* treated the friendless boy as one of his own children, of whom there were several. He sent him to the *Talmud Thora* (Hebrew Free School) with his own boys, and when he was thirteen years old he transferred him to the *Chedar* (private Hebrew school), where Isaac, as he was called, proved himself a very clever boy. He was instructed in the Mishna and the Talmud, and the Rebbe of the *Chedar* spoke hopefully of him to his benefactor, though he cautioned him that Isaac was of an extremely ambitious and selfish nature—qualities which had not escaped the notice of the good *isvostchik* and his family, for young Isaac had begun to prove himself the cuckoo in the nest.

At the age of fifteen he was told by the *isvostchik* that it was time for him to earn his own living, and that he had secured for him a place as clerk in a tanner's office. The ambitious soul of Isaac revolted at the idea, and on the night before he was to take

up his duties, he prised open the lid of the poor *isvostchik's* locked box, and taking from it all his benefactor's savings, which amounted to no more than sixty-five roubles, he disappeared from Vilna.

Isaac travelled day and night until he reached Kazan. He dared not stop on the way, for he had no passport to enable him to stay in any of the towns through which he passed. At Kazan he went straight to the Bogoroditski Monastery and asked to see the bishop. To him he told a specious tale of persecution at the hands of his own people, the Jews, on account of his leanings towards Christianity. He had fled from them, and desired to be received into the Holy Greek Church. The bishop listened attentively, and with secret satisfaction. Converts from the Jewish faith to the Orthodox Church were rare and greatly desired by the Tsar Nicholas, who stopped at no barbarities to secure their conversion. To be able to claim credit for a young, well-educated convert, who was also a student of the Mishna and Talmud, would be a feather in the cap of the bishop, and Isaac was admitted into the monastery. At his baptism the bishop stood as his God-father, and his name was changed to Alexis; Zolotnikoff was added as a surname; and with the blessings of his sponsors and the monks the renegade Jew was received into the bosom of the Church.

Zolotnikoff found life in the monastery far more to his liking than the poor home of the *isvostchik*. He continued his studies assiduously, but in his hours of leisure he gave a loose rein to his inclinations, which were of a sensual and passionate nature. In learning he far outstripped all the monks, most of whom were ignorant men, and on that account he became a

favourite of the bishop, who granted him all sorts of indulgences, and who closed his eyes to the flagrant escapades of the young novice. At the age of five and twenty he had acquired a reputation for learning and culture which extended beyond the walls of the monastery, and even beyond the borders of the Government of Kazan. His temperament, sensuous and artistic, led him to seek the society of cultivated people. He hated poverty, stupidity and ignorance; he looked upon them as offences against good taste, and unworthy of sympathy or recognition. And behind all was a compelling ambition, which urged him to seek preferment by all means in his power.

He was appointed *Higumenos* (abbot) to a monastery when he was thirty; and his reputation increased. At five and thirty he was summoned to St. Petersburg as a sub-bishop. In St. Petersburg he made a great name for himself by translating some of the Jewish mourning prayers into Russian and adapting them to the services of the Orthodox Church. The Metropolitan was pleased to approve of Bishop Zolotnikoff's translations, and they came into general use throughout Russia. In St. Petersburg, Zolotnikoff was not slow to recognise the political importance of the Church. It was apparent to him that a certain legal luminary held the key of the position, so he threw in his lot with Gospodin P——. As a result he was elected a member of the Holy Synod when he was forty years of age, and promoted to a bishopric. Meanwhile his patron was advanced to the highest honours, being placed even above the Metropolitan of Novgorod, and made first adviser to the Tsar.

The appointment of Gospodin P—— as Procurator

of the Holy Synod, brought about many changes in the Empire. The old religious intolerance of Tsar Nicholas was revived, and a remorseless campaign against heretics of all denominations was set on foot. The Procurator recognised that Courland contained an undue proportion of "unbelievers," more especially of Jews, and, accordingly, he appointed Zolotnikoff Bishop of Courland, with strict orders as to his attitude towards the religious convictions of the Province.

Thus it came about that Alexis Zolotnikoff arrived in Jelgava just before Easter in the year 18—, to take up his position as Bishop of Courland. He came with special instructions regarding the Jews; and one of his first acts was to procure a directory of the town, and from it to ascertain who were the leading men among the accursed people. The first name that he saw was that of Rabbi Daniel Herz—Chief Rabbi of the Government of Courland. The name was familiar to him, but he had to carry his memory back to the days of his boyhood before he could connect it with any individual. In that past which he hoped was buried when he entered the Bogoroditski Monastery, he remembered that at the *Chedar* his rival in learning was a boy named Daniel Herz. For more than a year they had sat together in the *Chedar* studying the Mishna and the Talmud. That was thirty years ago, and the bishop tried to persuade himself that there was no chance of Daniel Herz recognising him, even if the Chief Rabbi of Courland happened to be the boy at whose side he had studied in the *Chedar*. But the knowledge that the Daniel Herz of his boyhood must be fully acquainted with the facts of Isaac's disappearance from Vilna, and of his robbery

of the man who had befriended him, made his holiness exceedingly uneasy. He determined to settle the identity of the Chief Rabbi forthwith, and with this object in view he had summoned Father Nikon Paskevitch, the senior pope in Jelgava, to attend him at the palace. He was awaiting with anxiety the arrival of the worthy priest in the library, where hung the beautiful icon of the "Boje Materi."

A knock at the door warned him to compose his features to receive his subordinate. He turned from the contemplation of the icon, and stood in the middle of the room awaiting him. He made an impressive figure in his long cassock, and Father Nikon, when he was ushered into his presence, cringed up to him, and raising the hem of his garment, kissed it.

"Gloria Patri."

"In secula seculorum."

"Amen."

The bishop motioned Father Nikon to a chair and seated himself majestically at the writing table in the centre of the room. The pope, who was a man of about fifty, was evidently nervous in the presence of the great man; he plucked at his beard uneasily and stared at the rich furnishings and rows of leather-bound volumes with a vacant expression. Zolotnikoff saw at a glance that he had to do with a fool—just such a creature as he delighted in as a subordinate and despised as a man.

"I understand, Father Nikon, that you are the senior pope in Jelgava, and that you have been in charge here for a considerable time?"

"For ten years, Your Holiness," the pope answered, with the eagerness of a child who, though not knowing

his lesson, has been asked an easy question which he can answer.

"Very good," said the bishop. "Then you will know a great deal about the people here, and perhaps you can give me some explanation to account for the paucity in numbers of the members of the Holy Church in Jelgava?"

The heart of Father Nikon sank, for it seemed that the bishop was blaming him for the heretical tendencies of the inhabitants of Jelgava. He clutched at his beard, and the beads of perspiration stood out on his brow. What would happen to him and to his wife and children if the bishop turned him out of his meagre living? He dared not think of it. But the bishop was waiting for an answer, and he must throw himself upon his mercy.

"Holy Father," he exclaimed desperately, "there are more in our church than there were when I came to Jelgava. But the whole town is full of heretics whom it is impossible to convert. The Letts and Germans adhere to the Protestant churches; and then there are the Jews—they are past all salvation. I have striven, Your Holiness, with the forces of unbelief and heresy for ten years; but they all speak the German language, and I am unable to make myself understood."

The bishop's plump, well-shaped hand rested on the writing table, and his fingers tapped impatiently on the leather-covered surface. He had listened to this sort of talk before, and knew exactly how much to believe of Father Nikon's strife with the forces of heresy. Had Father Nikon been gifted with all the tongues of Pentecost, Zolotnikoff knew that his efforts

towards conversion would still be limited to the weekly service in his church, and to the performance of such other priestly duties as he was privately paid to perform.

"There are many Jews, you say, in Jelgava?"

Father Nikon raised his hands with a despairing gesture.

"Holy Father, the whole town is full of the infidels. All the great houses of business and shops are in their hands. Catholic Street, Writers Street, Post Street are all owned by Jews. They have five synagogues, all of them rich and prosperous; but not one kopek of their money comes to the church of the Holy Mother. Even the army in Jelgava is fed by a Jewish contractor, Jacov Serkovski. There is no end to their wealth and enterprise."

"A dangerous people," the bishop muttered as though he spoke to himself, but he intended the pope to hear his comment. "Do you know anything of their Rabbis?"

"The Chief Rabbi is a certain Daniel Herz. He has been many years in Jelgava."

The bishop leaned over the writing table and made a note of the name.

"And can you tell me where he came from?" he asked, with his eyes fixed on the slip of paper before him.

"From Vilna, Your Holiness."

"You also come from Vilna, I understand?"

"Yes, Your Holiness."

"Do you know anything of Rabbi Herz's family?"

"His father was a doctor in Vilna, Ephraim Herz."

Again the bishop made a note, and his brows con-

tracted with an expression of annoyance. There was no longer any doubt that Rabbi Herz and the Daniel Herz of his boyhood were one and the same. He pushed the paper from him and confronted Father Nikon once more.

"These Jews are a danger to the country," he said impressively. "They are a perpetual menace to the Government. They take the bread out of the mouths of our own people. They oppress the poor and needy with their usuary. By their vile religious rites they corrupt the moral tone of the community. You will not forget these things, Father Nikon, when you are visiting the members of your congregation, and you will warn them of the dangers, temporal and spiritual, which they incur by mixing too freely with these accursed people. I tell you that in the exercise of their religion there are certain rites which should make those who are parents of young children in Jelgava guard them with zealous care, more especially at this time of year, when the Jews celebrate their Passover. It is not to be forgotten that the Jews indulge in sacrifices."

Zolotnikoff's eyes were fixed steadily on Father Nikon. Whilst he was speaking he leaned forward in his chair and dropped his voice to a harsh, penetrating whisper, which struck terror to the poor pope, who sat tugging at his beard with nervous fingers; and when the bishop concluded with the weird and ghastly insinuation of human sacrifice, great beads of sweat stood out on the forehead of the terrified priest, who never for a moment questioned the truth of the bishop's assertion. At home he had little children of his own, and twice or thrice a week his wife received

visits from a young Jewess. Was it possible that Miriam Serkovski, whose nurse his wife Anna had been, was only awaiting a favourable opportunity to snatch away one of his dear ones for the ghastly purpose that the bishop suggested? Surely the daughter of "Nash Jacov" was incapable of such a crime! But Father Nikon was a superstitious and ignorant man; what the great Bishop Zolotnikoff said must of necessity be true. Undoubtedly the Jews were a dangerous and bloodthirsty people; and it was possible that even whilst he was sitting in the library of His Holiness, the ghoulish Jew woman might be enticing his little Vera to the synagogue, to be offered up on the altars of the idolatrous Hebrews. The thought of it maddened him, and he began to cross himself vigorously. And all the time Zolotnikoff's penetrating eyes were fixed upon him, and seemed to look him through and through. Abject terror possessed Father Nikon, and he could restrain himself no longer.

"Holy Mother of God!" he exclaimed. "Is such iniquity possible?"

"It is a well-known fact," said Zolotnikoff in measured tones, "that the unleavened bread of the Passover is mixed with human blood."

"But 'Nash Jacov' would not permit his daughter to steal my children," the wretched pope cried in an agony of fear.

"Calm yourself, Father Nikon," said the bishop severely. "And tell me, who is this 'Nash Jacov'?"

"He is the Jew, Serkovski, Your Holiness, the *podratchik* of the garrison. He is greatly respected in Jelgava. My wife was in his service as nurse when

I married her. She used to hold Miriam Serkovski in her arms. Surely she will not steal my children!"

"It is unbecoming a priest of the Holy Church to have dealings with infidels, except for their conversion to the true faith," said the bishop austerely.

"Holy Father, I have striven in vain to convert her," the pope explained; "but I still hope that she may be brought into the fold. It is for this reason that I encourage her to come to my house. But if she will steal my little ones——"

"Peace, Father Nikon," said Zolotnikoff, raising his hand warningly.

Now the facts of the case were not as Father Nikon Paskevitch had stated. Miriam Serkovski loved her old nurse, and frequently went to see her, always bringing presents of fruit and flowers, or clothes for the children. Furthermore, the house in which the Paskevitches lived was the property of Jacov Serkovski, and, by special request of his daughter, the pope and his family lived there free of rent. The idea of attempting to convert Miriam had never before entered the head of Father Nikon, and his wife would very speedily have put an end to any efforts on his part in that direction. But unreasoning fear had hold of the pope. The terrible warning of the bishop, given with all impressiveness, and accompanied by the searching stare of his keen, dark eyes, had shattered the weak nerves of Father Nikon. In his imagination all Jews were turned to hideous fiends munching unleavened bread with blood oozing from the corners of their mouths—Serkovski and his daughter with the rest of them. He wondered how he could have been so long deceived by their specious

behaviour. He ought to have known that their pretended kindness covered some foul design; for when did a Jew give anything without hope of gain?

"But she is so beautiful, it is impossible to believe it!" he muttered.

The bishop overheard him, and a new interest was imported into the subject for him.

"It is not well, Father Nikon, to be led aside from the truth by the consideration of fleshly lusts. The fact that this Jewish woman is beautiful should put you on your guard."

"She has a face, Your Holiness, like to the Holy Mother in the icon in my sanctuary." As Father Nikon spoke his eyes travelled round the room and rested at last upon the wanton face and bare bosom which peered out of the gold and jewelled vestments of the bishop's "Boge Materi." Father Nikon rose and crossed himself before it.

"Just such a face has Miriam Serkovski," he mused aloud, "but there is a difference—yes, a difference."

The bishop rose from his chair and intimated to Father Nikon that the interview was over, and with a final warning against intimacy with Jewish infidels, which once more sent a shiver through the pope's body, he dismissed him from his presence.

"Miserable fool!" Zolotnikoff exclaimed, as the door closed behind Father Nikon. "Ignorant, superstitious *moujik!* But you will do my work—that is all that I want of you."

He crossed the room and stood with his hands clasped behind him, looking up at the icon.

"I must see this Miriam Serkovski who resembles the 'Boge Materi,'" he said pensively. "'Just such

a face, but with a difference' the pope pronounced it That difference I can guess; and in time it may come to be just such a face."

He turned and walked back to the window.

"Daniel Herz—Rabbi in Israel—Jelgava is not large enough to hold us both. One of us must go. There can be no compromise between the Holy Synod and the Chief Rabbi of Courland."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BISHOP'S CHARGE.

It was Easter Sunday and a large concourse of people was filing out from the Cathedral after the morning service. The mutilated beggars in the porch were reaping a rich harvest by displaying to their more fortunate fellow men the raw stumps of their amputated limbs or the loathsome, grumous sores of some incurable disease, and pleading piteously for alms. Uniformed officers and officials, with clanking swords, accompanied by their wives and families, formed the majority of the congregation, for apart from the official classes there were but few members of the Orthodox Church in Jelgava.

Bishop Zolotnikoff had chosen this day to make his first appearance at the Cathedral, and to judge from the faces of the congregation as they emerged from the porch, the new bishop in his inaugural address had made a deep inpression on the minds of his hearers. He had taken as the text for his discourse the words, "And they crucified Him."

Zolotnikoff was a powerful and convincing preacher, and always gauged accurately the intelligence of his hearers. On the present occasion the majority of his congregation could boast of some little education, and therefore he forbore inciting them to violence against the Jews; but he drew a lurid picture of the accursed race who had sacrificed the Son of God on Calvary, and issued a solemn warning to his Christian hearers to have no dealings with them. Never before in Jelgava had such a sermon been heard. Hitherto the Jews had been regarded as a peaceable, if somewhat rapacious, section of the community. But under the new bishop, the great Zolotnikoff, member of the Holy Synod, it was evident that a new era was about to begin.

There was one man among the crowd which poured out of the Cathedral doors, whose face bore signs of acute anxiety and sorrow. As he hurried through the midst of the people in front of the Cathedral, many of them turned curious eyes upon him; for they recognised in him Rabbi Daniel Herz.

The Rabbi had attended the service in the Cathedral because he knew that the bishop would probably make a statement of some importance on the occasion of his first appearance as Bishop of Courland. For twenty-five years Courland had been free from the anti-semitism which existed in many of the Governments of Russia; but the appointment of a new bishop caused the Chief Rabbi and many of his race in the Province considerable anxiety. Amongst the Jews Bishop Zolotnikoff attracted a great deal of attention, for it was he who had translated and adapted the Hebrew mourning prayers for

use in the Greek Church. So when Rabbi Herz heard that he had been appointed Bishop of Courland, he wrote a letter to the Chief Rabbi in St. Petersburg asking for information concerning Bishop Zolotnikoff. The Chief Rabbi in St. Petersburg made enquiries and traced Zolotnikoff to the Bogorditski Monastery in Kázan. He wrote to the Chief Rabbi in Kazan, requesting him to ascertain, if possible, the date of admission of Alexis Zolotnikoff to the monastery, and any other particulars concerning him which he could discover. The answer came back that, as the result of his enquiries, he found that Alexis Zolotnikoff had been admitted to the Bogorditski Monastery when he was fifteen years old, and that he was baptised subsequent to his admission. It was believed that he was a Jew, and he appeared to have had some instruction in the Mishna and Talmud; but that previous to his admission to the monastery he was unknown in Kazan, and no trace could be found of his antecedents.

Chief Rabbi Herz, therefore, attended the service in the Cathedral on Easter Sunday with some anxiety; for there were two facts which in his estimation told against the new bishop—first, that he was a renegade Jew; and secondly, that he was a recognised supporter of the new Procurator of the Holy Synod. Bishop Zolotnikoff, in his address to the congregation, had fully confirmed the Rabbi's worst fears by proclaiming a campaign against Judaism; and the Rabbi left the Cathedral sick at heart for the strife which lay before the peaceful inhabitants of Jelgava, and more especially his own people in the town. But there was another matter

which troubled the Rabbi, and that was the familiarity of Bishop Zolotnikoff's face. Those eager, piercing eyes were known to him, but he could not recall their identity. He certainly had never met the bishop in St. Petersburg, he himself had never been in Kazan. If he had ever seen Zolotnikoff it must have been before he entered the monastery in Kazan. Then he remembered that Zolotnikoff was only fifteen when he suddenly made his appearance at the Bogoroditski Monastery. The bishop was about the same age as himself. Was it possible that he had known him in his boyhood at Vilna?

As he was hurrying back to his house, his mind in perplexity, his attention was suddenly distracted by an *isvostchik* who was cuffing a small boy in the roadway. The good Rabbi remonstrated gently with the man, and the boy ran off down the street and disappeared round the first corner. The *isvostchik* climbed up on to his *droshki*, muttering:

"That is all very well, Rabbi, but the young rascal stole a ten kopek piece which I had dropped."

The incident recalled to the Rabbi's mind a long-forgotten occurrence—the robbery of the old *isvostchik* in Vilna by his adopted son, Isaac. Then, with a flood of recollection, the identity of Bishop Zolotnikoff was revealed to him. This powerful member of the Holy Synod was none other than Isaac, the foundling, who had robbed his benefactor and escaped from Vilna thirty years ago! Rabbi Daniel Herz was a great-souled, charitable man, but bearing in mind the address which the bishop had that morning delivered in the Cathedral, he was not sorry to find himself in a position to bring discredit and

disgrace on the declared enemy of the Jews, should dire necessity demand it.

Meanwhile the Bishop of Courland, in his full robes, attended by his chaplain and secretary, was driving back in state to his palace. The streets were full of people in holiday attire, and the bishop attracted a great deal of attention as he passed. Some saluted or bared their heads as he went by, but these were in the minority; for the most part the crowd stared at him with a certain amount of curiosity, but with no show of respect. Zolotnikoff's dignified appearance and the magnificence of his garments excited their admiration and led to comparisons to the disadvantage of the late bishop. Zolotnikoff, though he appeared immersed in his own thoughts, was perfectly conscious of the attitude of the majority of the people in the streets towards him. It was exceedingly galling to this Prince of the Church to find that comparatively few of the inhabitants of Jelgava paid homage to his exalted station. He hated them for their indifference almost as much as he hated the Jews; and he inwardly cursed the Procurator for banishing him to such a godless community. But he knew what was expected of him; and the sooner he could bring about the desired result the sooner would he receive advancement and honours from his superiors. His rise to power had been rapid, and it was not likely to be checked by such a trifle as the indifference to his authority of the inhabitants of a small provincial town. With the Christian heretics he would deal later on, his first duty lay with the Jews, and more especially with Chief Rabbi Daniel Herz.

Amongst those who witnessed the passing of the bishop was Yuri von Belaieff, son of the Politzmaister. He had been at the Cathedral service with his father and mother, and had left them to drive home, himself preferring to walk. The bishop's sermon had made a deep impression on the boy and filled him with indignation.

"What sort of a God does this man worship?" he asked himself. "A God of Love or a God of Vengeance?"

The question opened a long vista of theological anomalies, and the more he thought of them the more glaring appeared the inconsistencies of the Church's dogmas. He could not reconcile the teachings of Jesus with the intolerance of the creed which claimed to be founded on His doctrine. He knew that in His supreme agony Jesus had cried, "Father, forgive them," and yet the Church was demanding vengeance on His murderers' descendants after a lapse of nearly eighteen centuries. Therefore the soul of Yuri Belaieff revolted against dogmas and creeds, and unconsciously yearned for true religion. As he mused on these things the clatter of horses' feet and a sudden cessation of movement on the part of the people who streamed past him, made him look up. Zolotnikoff's carriage swept by in the broad roadway and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"So you have come to Jelgava to spread dissension, and to poison the minds of the people!" said Yuri, gazing after the bishop's carriage. Then the stream of people moved on again, but Yuri remained standing on the pavement just in front of the house of Father Nikon Paskevitch. The door opened behind

him, and he stepped on one side to allow of egress from it. Women's voices reached him from the passage—a sweet, silvery laugh, and then:

"You can tell Father Nikon, Anna, that he need not be afraid of me. I think your children are perfect darlings; but I am not going to steal them!"

Yuri von Belaieff looked round curiously, and from the little green door of Father Nikon's house came the most beautiful girl that he had ever seen.

Yuri was only two and twenty, an age when beauty is apt to rank above its intrinsic value. Certainly his heart beat faster at the sight of her, and all thoughts of Zolotnikoff and theologies were at once dispelled by her presence. She passed close to him, and in the enthusiasm of youth he longed to call to her to stop; but a sense of the fitness of things stayed him. He gazed after her retreating figure until she reached the first turning out of the street, which she took. Then he hesitated. Father Nikon was known to him, for his father's house was within his parish, and they frequently attended the services at his church. Should he go in and ask who she was? Then he was ashamed of himself, and a wave of colour mounted to his temples. Anna Paskevitch, peeping out of the open window, noticed his confusion, and laughed softly to herself.

"Oï, Oï, Gospodin Yuri!" she exclaimed beneath her breath; "what would the Baron say if he saw you looking like that at Miriam Serkovski, the daughter of the Jewish *podratchik?*"

Anna Paskevitch was a good wife, a devoted mother, and an arch-heretic. It was quite impossible for her to regard seriously a creed which acknow-

ledged Nikon to be a holy man endowed with special inspiration—yet she was very fond of him. She found it equally difficult to work up any enthusiasm over the cheap icon of St. Nicholas, whose face she cleaned regularly once a week with the corner of a damp towel. She would comb out her husband's long hair, brush down his cassock and send him off to his church in good time, as methodically as she fed and tended the children—it was part of her duty as a married woman. Another part was to rate Nikon soundly when he came home smelling of *vodka*, or when he lost more than 25 kopeks at cards, or when he did anything unusually stupid. She was a capable, practical woman, with a good heart and no superstition or misplaced veneration. The little one-storied green house, which Jacov Serkovski had lent to her at his daughter's request, was a model of cleanliness; her children were well favoured and regularly washed; and her husband was kept in good order and discreetly managed. At the age of sixteen she entered the Serkovskis' service as nursemaid to the baby Miriam, and she remained with them until she was five and twenty, when she married Nikon Paskevitch. Her marriage to a priest of the Orthodox Church did not prevent her from remaining on the most friendly terms with her former employers. At first Nikon had made a feeble protest against her intimacy with Jewish infidels, but when he found that many material benefits were to be derived from the friendship of the Serkovskis, he ceased to oppose their visits to the house, and accepted the good things which they brought as a solatium to his outraged feelings.

The summons which Father Nikon had received to attend the bishop at the palace had caused a stir in the household. Never before had such an event befallen the poor pope, and he was overcome with nervous apprehension at the idea of meeting the great Zolotnikoff. A thousand times he asked himself what could be the reason of the summons. Was it to blame him for anything? Anna laughed at her husband's fears. What was this precious Zolotnikoff but a man like Nikon himself? There was nothing to be afraid of, even if he were a member of the Holy Synod. She would like to interview him herself! And so forth, whilst she helped Nikon into his best long blue coat and brushed out his greasy locks.

When he returned from the dreaded interview Father Nikon was in a state of nervous prostration that bordered on imbecility. He rushed into the house calling loudly for the children, and thanking the Holy Mother in extravagant terms for their safety. Then he babbled incoherently about the accursed Jews, more especially Miriam Serkovski, who he swore should never enter his house again. Then ranging himself in front of the icon, he fell to crossing himself and muttering prayers to the Holy Mother and the saints to preserve his little ones in safety. Not one word of explanation could Anna extract from him, and at last seizing him by the shoulders as he stood in front of the icon, she shook him violently and pushed him down into a chair.

"What is the matter with you?" she demanded impatiently. "Are you mad?"

"The Jews—accursed people—they will steal our little ones and eat them. His Holiness told me so."

At this point Anna Paskevitch lost her temper; and Father Nikon, sitting dejectedly in the chair into which his wife had thrust him, was forced to listen to a tirade against his ingratitude and stupidity, and the unscrupulous mendacity of all bishops and holy men of every description. She had lived for nine years amongst the Jews, she reminded him, and therefore she was likely to know more of them than this rascally bishop. Jacov Serkovski was worth the whole Holy Synod put together and the Tsar as well, and she would see them all consigned to the devil rather than turn Miriam from her doors.

To Father Nikon his wife's language was rank blasphemy, but he made no effort to stay the flow of her words. Never before had he seen Anna in such a temper—not even on the unfortunate occasion when he had returned from a baptism in a state of hopeless intoxication and without his hat. He listened to her meekly, and when she at last brought her remarks to a close, he was almost persuaded that Anna must be right after all, and that His Holiness was perhaps not acquainted with the Jews in Jelgava, who probably differed from those of other places in their customs.

When Miriam called to see Anna on Sunday morning she had quite recovered her good temper, and recounted the whole story with much amusement. But when Miriam passed it on to her father at home, Jacov Serkovski became very grave, and soon after he went out to call on Rabbi Daniel Herz.

## CHAPTER V.

### "LIKE—BUT WITH A DIFFERENCE."

JELGAVA regarded it as an honour that Eric Antacolski had consented to give a concert in the Opera House. All the boxes and the best seats had been sold weeks beforehand, and on Easter Monday night the house was crowded. The students from the Real School and the Gymnasium, with silver and gold braidings on their caps, were in great force. They had been allotted seats on the stage behind the orchestra, and they whiled away the time before the arrival of the members of the orchestra by singing national songs, and more especially *Die Wacht am Rhein*, for they were mostly of German origin. Yuri Belaieff, who had been a distinguished member of the Gymnasium three years before, and who was still looked upon by the boys as a leader amongst themselves, sat with his old schoolfellows on the stage. From this point of vantage he had a full view of the house, and watched with interest the arrival of the occupants of the boxes and of the front rows of seats in the body of the theatre.

The Governor of State and the Governor-General

of Courland both arrived and occupied boxes in the centre, adjoining one another. In the box next to that of the Governor-General was the new bishop, Zolotnikoff, with his *entourage*. Yuri's father and mother had the box next to the Governor of State. There were other officials in the neighbouring boxes, so that the grand tier made a gorgeous show of gold-laced uniforms and resplendent dresses—for the ladies had arrayed themselves in their brightest and best. There was only one man in the grand tier who wore the plain, homely garb of the civilian, and he was Jacov Serkovski; but his party was not without a uniformed representative, for General Bulvanoff, the *Glavnie Natchilnik* of Bausk, was leaning over the back of Miriam's chair and pointing out to her the celebrities in the house.

"That is our new bishop in the box next to the Governor-General," he said, indicating Zolotnikoff. "He has a curious face, his keen eyes and aquiline nose might lead one to believe that he came of your people."

"I hope not," said Miriam gravely. For Miriam, like her father, was devoted to her faith, and regarded with horror any Jew who recanted from the religion of his fathers.

Yuri Belaieff from his seat behind the orchestra could see Miriam as she leaned forward in the box. The sight of her set his pulses beating fast again. Who could she be? He turned to his neighbour and asked who was the old man in the fourth box on the right. But at that moment Antacolski came upon the stage, and all the students rose with a roar of welcome to the great violinist.

It was some minutes before the applause subsided, and the conductor was standing with his bâton poised in the air, waiting for silence. As soon as order was restored the orchestra took up the opening chords of Spöhr's Dramatic Concerto, and a hush fell on the audience. Antacolski played magnificently. It was a performance which in itself was a work of art of rare distinction and exquisite emotion. To every phrase he accorded the fullest measure of feeling—now pleading, now stately, rising anon to strains of joyous triumph, and falling again to blank despair. He carried his audience with him through every movement of the Concerto, and left them spellbound at the end. Then the applause broke out anew, the audience rising to their feet and calling loudly for Antacolski to return. Fräulein Erard was weeping copiously; for apart from the natural emotion which the Concerto must arouse in the breast of any lover of music, she cherished fond memories in regard to it. It was the first thing that she had heard Eric Antacolski play in public. Miriam was very quiet; she felt that Antacolski's art was beyond the criticism of applause, and her sympathetic heart went out to Fräulein Erard in her evident distress; for she guessed the real cause of it, and knew its hopelessness, for was not Antacolski a Jew and Fräulein Erard a member of the Lutheran Church?

Bishop Zolotnikoff was enraptured with the playing of the violinist. To the sensual nature no art appeals more strongly than music; for music rises to ideals beyond our material environment. The painter can but give us what he sees; the poet that which he fancies; but music soars in a sphere of its own, in

which the beauties of nature and the loftiest words have no place. It transcends in expression all other arts, and leads us to an elysium of unreality, where fancy is free and unbounded by the conventionalities which circumscribe our earthly existence. Let the imagination turn to what fancies it will, music will idealise them.

Zolotnikoff sat with closed eyes listening to the wonderful strains of Antacolski's violin. His mind was freed from all strivings of ambition, and from the fear and hatred of the Jews, which had taken such a strong hold upon him since he had discovered the identity of Daniel Herz. He was living in a paradise of sensuous pleasures, in stately marble corridors whose perfectly just dimensions delighted the eye, where he reclined on a luxurious couch quaffing deep draughts of golden nepenthe, the blessed wine that brings forgetfulness. Before him stood a sweet, pale nun, regarding him with eyes of tender innocence. He spoke to her, and love dawned in their depths—love and great trustfulness. How easy it had been! He drank again, and in place of the sweet recluse there stood a dark beauty of insatiable passions and violent emotions—hard, jealous, desperate. Her fierce Tartar eyes flashed wantonly upon him. Hers was the conquest long years ago in far Kazan. He raised the cup to his lips, and she faded from his sight. Thus one by one he called them up, the dear, dead loves of yesterday; dwelt for a moment in their old-time sway, and cast them to oblivion. Then came the last, whose angel face he had corrupted to a wanton's lustful visage, and in a mood of hideous blasphemy had caused to be painted for his icon of

the Holy Mother. He had left her in St. Petersburg when he came to Jelgava; but he still cherished her memory and stood often before the icon in earnest contemplation.

The Concerto came to an end, the house broke into a thunder of applause, and Zolotnikoff opened his eyes. It seemed to him that the angel face, as he had once remembered it, was still before him, that it looked at him with wide, innocent eyes. Surely it could not be! He raised his opera glasses and turned them in the direction of the haunting face; and the words of Father Nikon, as he looked at the icon, recurred to his mind: "Just such a face has Miriam Serkovski—but there is a difference."

Yes, it was "just such a face" as he had once known, but more beautiful and more tender. The hot blood surged within him, as he recalled the delicious days of sweet uncertainty and of final triumph. What would he not give to have them over again? How soon the sweetness stales when the bloom is rubbed from the fruit! But it is easy to throw away the vapid core and to reach forth a hand to the ripe fruit on the tree.

The orchestra plunged into the profound melancholy of a Russian Symphony, and the audience sank to instant silence. Zolotnikoff leaned back in his chair, but he did not close his eyes again, they were directed towards the box occupied by Jacov Serkovski and his party. In the short interval between the first and second movements he called his secretary, and told him to find out who was the gentleman in civilian clothes occupying the opposite box. The secretary retired, and the orchestra struck up the

quaint, characteristic *allegro* of the second movement. Zolotnikoff's temperament rallied to the dancing melody. He glanced at himself in the mirror which hung on the opposite side of the box, and decided that he was still a young man with some pretensions to good looks. There was no reason, as yet, why he should despair of attracting the fancy of the opposite sex. And then he once more turned towards the side of the house where sat Miriam Serkovski.

The movement came to its abrupt termination, and the secretary, who had returned, bent over Zolotnikoff and said that the man about whom His Holiness had made enquiry was Jacov Serkovski, the Jew, and that the other gentleman in the box was General Bulvanoff, *Glavnie Natchilnik* of Bausk; the ladies were the daughter of Serkovski and her companion. The information was what Zolotnikoff had expected—Father Nikon had given him a good clue. But that the *Glavnie Natchilnik* of Bausk should be at the concert in company with Jews was exceedingly displeasing to His Holiness. For a man in an important military command to associate with a Jewish *podratchik* was a clear indication of the demoralisation which existed throughout Courland.

With the opening of the third movement Zolotnikoff dismissed all thoughts of the *Glavnie Natchilnik* and the *podratchik*, and let his fancy dwell on more congenial subjects; and when it closed in a joyous march of triumph, he had persuaded himself that his triumph would be as easily and gloriously attained—an opinion which even the hopeless despair of the finale was unable to shake.

Then Antacolski played again—this time it was

Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata—and again he raised his audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Yuri Belaieff, with his attention divided between Antacolski and the occupants of the fourth box on the right side, was spending a really happy evening. If only he could find out who she was! But the boy next to him did not know, and a feeling of reserve prevented him from making further enquiries.

After Antacolski had played for the third and last time a few of the audience rose to go before the final item on the programme. The Serkovskis were among the number; they had arranged to meet Antacolski in the entrance and to drive him home before the crush of people leaving the theatre began. Zolotnikoff gave the same reason to his secretary for wishing to withdraw, and he timed his departure so as to meet the Serkovskis on the stairs. There was a good deal of ceremony in the movements of this member of the Holy Synod; he was preceded and followed by retainers, who formed a little procession in the passage and moved with solemn dignity towards the main staircase. The people who were leaving the theatre stood aside in respectful silence to let the procession pass, bowing and crossing themselves before the holy man. Zolotnikoff's keen eyes looked neither to the right hand nor the left; they were directed straight in front of him to the head of the staircase. The people from the opposite side of the house were beginning to descend in twos and threes, and the bishop checked his procession at the head of the stairs to let them pass. Presently he saw the Serkovskis and General Bulvanoff coming towards him. Miriam was in front by herself, Fräulein Erard

followed with the general, and old Jacov Serkovski brought up the rear. Miriam turned down the broad stairs, and before the others could follow, Zolotnikoff gave the order to move on. Instantly two of the servants who headed the procession barred the passage on the opposite side, to keep the stair clear for His Holiness. The rest of the cortège descended to the entresol, where Miriam Serkovski stood awaiting the rest of her party. The procession halted whilst the bishop's carriage was being called, and Zolotnikoff turned with dignity to the girl.

"My daughter," he said, "I fear that I have inadvertently been the means of separating you from the rest of your party. I hope that you will accept my protection until the arrival of your father."

Miriam was not at all embarrassed. She regarded the incident as entirely accidental, and she was flattered by the attentions of so exalted a person as the bishop.

"You are very kind," she answered frankly. Then the story which Anna Paskevitch had told her about her husband's interview with the bishop, and of the ridiculous idea that the Jews steal and eat children recurred to her. Of course it was absurd! Nikon Paskevitch must have misunderstood what was said to him—he was such a fool!

At that moment Jacov Serkovski and his party joined them. Zolotnikoff turned to him with a gracious smile.

"I have much pleasure in restoring your daughter to you, Gospodin Serkovski," he said, taking Miriam's hand and leading her towards him. "It was through the carelessness of my servants that she became

separated from you, and therefore I took upon myself to look after her until the arrival of her natural protector."

Serkovski received his daughter from the bishop in silence, with an inscrutable expression on his handsome face. He, too, remembered the story of the stolen children, and he also knew of the bishop's sermon of the day before. Zolotnikoff looked at him swiftly, and guessed part, at least, of what was passing in his mind.

"Although we may differ in our creeds, Gospodin Serkovski," he said suavely, "that is no reason why we should neglect the courtesies due from man to man. I am happy to have rendered a service, however slight, to your charming daughter."

Serkovski bowed, but could still find nothing to say. Miriam had joined Fräulein Erard and the general, and was laughing with them quietly over the incident, and hoping that her father would not say anything to offend the bishop; for she knew him to be uncompromising in the defence of his faith.

A stentorian voice announced the arrival of His Holiness's carriage. With a quick glance at Miriam and a bow to the rest of the party, Zolotnikoff passed on to the entrance.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AT THE GARDEN GATE.

FATHER NIKON was again summoned to attend the bishop on the following day. The interview had been protracted, and when the pope at last left the palace his face was radiant with happiness.

"See what the Holy Mother can do for us!" he muttered to himself, glancing lovingly at a twenty rouble note which he held in his hand. "She can make the poor man rich in a moment of time. His Holiness is indeed great and holy"—here he crossed himself—"and he is wise beyond comprehension. But why should I not tell Anna of our riches? When he gave me the money he said, 'tell no one of this, not even your wife.' Why should I not tell my wife? And then he said that I must serve him faithfully and in silence. And I am not to forbid Miriam Serkovski to come to my house, but that I must strive to convert her to the way of truth, and she will not steal the little ones."

He walked on for some distance in thought; he

was endeavouring to recall all the instructions which he had received from the bishop, but his brain worked very slowly, and the excitement of his sudden accession to wealth prevented any coherence in the train of his thoughts. He would buy some material for a new dress for his wife, and for little Theodore some woollen socks—and what should he get for Vera? He was passing a *traktir* (restaurant); he would go in and have a *stakan* of *vodka*, and think it all over.

He entered and sat down at a little table. There were some officers drinking and talking loudly at a neighbouring table.

"He is going to make it mighty hot for the Jews—and a good thing too," said one of them.

"By the Holy Mother!" a second exclaimed, "it is about time something was done with the cursed sons of dogs. Well, here's to the health of His Holiness and damnation to the Jews!"

The speaker, who was Basil Struganoff, quartermaster of the 21st regiment, drained his glass and rose from the table. The conversation which he had overheard called to Father Nikon's remembrance further details of his interview with the bishop. His Holiness had spoken of the necessity of keeping a careful watch on the doings of the Jews, with a view to checking any practices on their part which would be dangerous to the community, and he had suggested that possibly Father Nikon might know of some man who could be trusted to keep an eye on them and report on their movements. Father Nikon knew of no such man, nor did he understand what the bishop wanted. But when he confessed as much His Holiness became impatient, and told him that he must

find a man who was in a position to give information concerning the Jews, and that he would give him the necessary instructions. In the narrow circle of Father Nikon's acquaintances he knew of no one who would be likely to find favour with the bishop; but if only he could summon courage to speak to this burly soldier, whose views on the Jewish question seemed to coincide exactly with those of His Holiness, he might be able to help him out of the difficulty. So when Struganoff swaggered past him with his sword clanking at his heels, Father Nikon ventured to call him.

"My son, I would have a word with you."

"Holy Father!" exclaimed Struganoff, crossing himself before the pope. "I did not see you or I should not have passed you by without ceremony."

"Sit down, my son, and drink a *stakan* of *vodka* with me."

Struganoff was mightily astonished that a pope should offer to pay for drink for him; all his previous experience with holy men had taught him that it is the part of the unconsecrated to pay. But he made no difficulty about accepting the pope's invitation, and sat down beside him.

"I was glad to hear, my son," Father Nikon continued, "that you have a proper respect for that great man, our bishop, and a very proper contempt for the infidel."

"His Holiness is the right sort," said Struganoff, emptying his glass. "I read his sermon in *Stephenhagen's Gazette*. That is the sort of bishop we want in Courland—one who will make the cursed Jews tremble. Pfui—how I hate the Jews! That rascal

Serkovski is the worst of the lot, though they do call him 'Nash Jacov.' He has enriched himself by swindling the poor soldiers out of their rations—I am a quartermaster, so I ought to know what I am talking about. I tell you, *Batushka*, Jacov Serkovski is the greatest scoundrel amongst them, and if you have the ear of His Holiness you can tell him so."

Father Nikon was astonished. Never before had he heard a word against Jacov Serkovski; but, of course, a quartermaster must know, for he would have daily business transactions with the *podratchik*. He wondered why Anna had never told him of this—she, too, must know it, for she had lived in the Serkovskis' house for nine years. It was wrong of Anna never to have told him what a wicked man Serkovski really was.

"His Holiness is very anxious to obtain information about the practices of the Jews. He was speaking to me of it only this morning," he said with an air of importance.

"Then you have the honour of his acquaintance?" Struganoff asked.

"His Holiness consults me about everything," Father Nikon asserted pompously. "I have just left the palace after a long interview. His Holiness is greatly disturbed about the Jews. He fears that their evil practices are a danger to the community. He wishes to have them watched, and he has instructed me to find a suitable man to give him information about them. When I heard your sentiments, I thought that you, my son, might be able to help me, for I know of no suitable person. But you must not tell anyone about it," he concluded

cautiously, mindful of Zolotnikoff's admonition to secrecy.

Struganoff's brow contracted, and for some moments he leaned back in his chair, fumbling with the empty glass on the table, in deep thought. Here was an opportunity of making a few roubles out of the bishop, and of bringing discredit on Jacov Serkovski. As he pondered over it, the possibilities of the situation widened out—the few roubles expanded to hundreds, the discredit of his enemy turned to ruin; and finally he would be able to arrange matters with Kotke Trubman, to whom he owed a hundred roubles, which carried interest at the rate of sixty per cent., to their mutual advantage.

"I could help you, *Batushka*, easily enough," he answered slowly; "but I should have to arrange matters with His Holiness himself."

Father Nikon felt that a great responsibility had been lifted off his shoulders, and that he had done something already for the twenty roubles which the bishop had given him. All that was necessary was to introduce this officer to His Holiness, and leave them to make their own plans, whatever they might be, whilst he himself would have no further trouble in the matter. He arranged with Struganoff to meet him at the same place the next day, and when they had sealed the bargain with another glass of *vodka*, Father Nikon rose and left the *traktir*.

Struganoff watched the departure of the pope with a light heart. Never had such a piece of good fortune come in his way! The bishop, who had openly declared himself an enemy of the Jews, wanted special information regarding them—for what pur-

pose? Was it likely that he wanted to hear a good report of their doings or a bad one? There might be other things besides reports that His Holiness wanted; but, of course, he would not have confided them to the fool of a pope. Kotke Trubman was the very man for the bishop, and Kotke should cancel the debt for the introduction, and His Holiness should also pay for the privilege of Kotke's acquaintance; and Kotke and himself would work together and share profits. He would go and see Kotke about it at once.

The history of Kotke Trubman was chequered. His grandfather was a Jew; his father renounced the Jewish faith, became a butcher's apprentice and took to drink. As a Christian and a butcher Kotke senior was a failure, but as a drunkard he excelled, and his fame spread throughout the Baltic Provinces, until his name became a proverb—"as drunk as Kotke." He died of drink when little Kotke was only nine years old, and the boy was left to bring himself up, for his mother had died of a broken heart some years before. The Rabbi in Jelgava, knowing of little Kotke's descent, arranged for him to be cared for by the Jewish community and educated in the *Chedar*. At fourteen Kotke ran away from his guardians, and rapidly developed into a worthy son of his father. He lived by his wits and the agility of his fingers for some years, and then recognising that the time had arrived for him to settle down to an honourable career, he became an *isborstchik*, and stole Jewish boys for the Russian Army. The reorganisation of the army by Alexander II. deprived him of this profitable occupation; but by that time Kotke Trubman had saved a little money, which he was prepared to lend to the

needy at exorbitant rates of interest. There were other ways, too, by which he made a living. He hung all day about the *traktirs* and saloons in the fashionable quarter of the town, and was always ready to play billiards or to take a hand in a game of cards; and it was astonishing how often he won. Then, Kotke was a man of specious and insinuating ways, and when he had wormed himself into the good graces of any man he was careful to explain how ready he was to serve him in any way—for a consideration. He would hang about the Law Courts and offer his services as witness to litigants whose case needed a little more evidence to make it convincing. Kotke was a first-class witness and a bland liar. No amount of cross examination could shake him, but it was prudent to prevent the other side from having access to him—they might offer him more. He would set a house on fire to oblige the heavily-insured owner for ten per cent. of the insurance money. And he was a terror to all thieves and rogues, whom he blackmailed unmercifully.

Struganoff was convinced that Kotke was the very man for the bishop. He would be certain to tell His Holiness whatever he was anxious to hear, and since he was once a Jew himself, he would make no mistakes. Therefore Basil Struganoff went in search of Kotke in his favourite haunts, whilst Father Nikon returned home to the bosom of his family with a length of gorgeous puce bombazine under his arm, wondering how he was going to account for it to his wife.

Anna Paskevitch had sent off her husband to his interview with the bishop in his best clothes, and

with many warnings as to his behaviour, and the amount of credence that could be given to the statements of His Holiness.

"I suppose if the bishop wants to see you, you must go, Nikon," she said. "But don't come home again with childish stories about eating people. And mind, Nikon, if the old wretch tries to bully you, stand up to him, and take none of his sauce."

She watched him shuffle up the street with a feeling of affection mingled with contempt. She loved him because he was the father of her children, and, in his stupid way, an unselfish and devoted husband; she despised him for his weakness and superstition and want of enterprise. Being an honest and straightforward woman she did not attempt to disguise her feelings from herself; and as Father Nikon disappeared from view, she went back within the little green house, muttering, "Ah, if only I had been a man!"

But since fate had ordained that Anna was to be a woman, she resigned herself to the inevitable, and set about the duties of her sex with praiseworthy energy. She dusted the cheap suite of furniture in the parlour, and washed the leaves of the plant which stood upon the card table in the corner of the room. Then she scattered a fresh layer of sawdust on the floor, and with a flick of her duster at the icon of St. Nicholas in the angle of the wall, she completed her operations in the parlour, and went to attend to her children. She lingered over them more lovingly than over her household duties. She romped with the baby Theodore in his cot, and persuaded the five-year-old Vera to join in the sport, until the laughter made her

glad at heart that she was after all a woman. Then she took them out into the garden to play. It was a garden such as all children love—rank, overgrown, tangled with the luxuriance of unrestrained Nature. There were no neat flower beds on which little Vera must not run, but there was a small patch of vegetables growing in one corner, which Anna kept carefully weeded. She had no time to attend to the rest of the garden, so that weeds and shrubs grew unrestrained at their own sweet will. At the far end a green copper roof peered above the tangled growth surrounding the stone walls of an old building, which had once served as a powder magazine, but which for many years had been out of use. This mysterious house, with its blind walls and bolted door, was a source of terror to little Vera. It was the only stone building that she had ever seen, except the churches and the Schloss of the Governor on the river, and in its lonely silence, overshadowed by huge trees, and concealed by a jungle of tangled vegetation, it was to her a house of fear.

There had been a day when the little green house was a government office, and the magazine was stored with powder and shells; but the army reforms had changed all this. The magazine was removed to a more commodious building near the new barracks, and the old site with its buildings passed into the hands of a jeweller, who made icons of the Holy Mother and the saints. One day the wife of the jeweller disappeared, and shortly after the man himself went mad and was taken away to the asylum by the police. The little property came into the market again; but no one would buy it, for it had acquired

an evil reputation. Worthy burghers would hurry past the spot on dark evenings, crossing themselves and muttering prayers to the saints to protect them. There were some who declared that they had heard shrieks issuing from the old powder-house; others who had seen shadowy forms gliding noiselessly among the trees at the end of the garden. There appeared to be nobody who was willing to buy the property, and the price was reduced in the hope of attracting a purchaser. Jacov Serkovski waited until there had been a further reduction, and then made an offer for it, which was accepted.

He used the premises for some time as a supplementary storehouse. Then he enlarged his buildings in Marien Street, and no longer needed outside accommodation for his stores. So he put the little house in order and gave it a fresh coat of green paint, intending to let it. But Miriam intervened on behalf of her old nurse, and "Nash Jacov" consented to lend it to Father Nikon and his wife.

Anna Paskevitch was scarcely likely to see or fear ghosts in her new home, nor would she allow her superstitious husband to indulge in any ridiculous fancies. She successfully laid the spectre which was supposed to haunt the old magazine; and in a few years the very existence of the squat, solid stone building was forgotten and its presence almost hidden by the rank growth which surrounded it.

Anna leant over the gate which opened on to the street and watched for Nikon's return. There were but few people about and Father Nikon was nowhere to be seen.

"He is very late," she said to herself. "I wonder

what mischief the holy man is putting into his head. I'll be bound it is for no good purpose that he wants him. But Nikon will tell me all about it when he returns."

She was on the point of turning away from the gate when she caught sight of Yuri Belaieff on the opposite side of the street. He was sauntering very leisurely, and as he passed the house he looked anxiously towards it. It was evident that he did not see Anna, who was leaning over the garden gate by the side of the house. When he had gone a little way up the street he turned abruptly and walked back, and again he looked anxiously at the house. Anna laughed to herself.

"She is not here to-day, Gospodin Yuri," she murmured. "You need not waste your time careering up and down the street."

But in a few minutes Yuri appeared again on her side of the street, and seeing Anna at the gate he stopped to speak to her.

"Good-day, Anna Ivanovna," he said, addressing her in the Russian fashion seldom heard in Courland.

"Good-day, Your Highborn Yuri Alexandrovitch," Anna replied elaborately, dropping a deep curtsey. She was not going to allow the son of the Politzmaister to assume his Petersburg airs to her. "You seem to find the air of our street agreeable to your health."

Yuri coloured up, and answered with some confusion:

"I was just passing through——"

Anna laughed frankly in his face.

"You have 'passed through' three times in the last ten minutes, Gospodin Yuri, and you seem to take a great interest in our little house. Perhaps you are looking for Father Nikon to confess your sins—but he is out."

Anna's raillery was not unfriendly, there was a twinkle of amusement in her honest eyes, and Yuri Belaieff plucked up courage.

"I would rather confess to his wife," he answered, looking her straight in the face.

"I dare say it would be just as efficacious and a great deal cheaper," said Anna the heretic; "but I will not promise you absolution."

"I will chance it," Yuri answered, leaning his arm on the top of the gate.

"Well, my son, what have you to confess?"

"I have lost my heart," said Yuri; "and I think it must be a goddess who has stolen it. The last time that it was safe in my possession was on Easter Sunday. I was walking past your house, when I saw the most lovely woman, or goddess, as the case may be, leave your door. Then I found that my heart was gone."

"And you have been hunting for it all the morning in the street!" said Anna, laughing.

"I thought I might see the little thief again, and find out her name. Perhaps you could enlighten me?"

"You must get another heart, Gospodin Yuri, if you have really lost your own," said Anna not unkindly. She was sorry for the handsome boy with his frank enthusiasm for her darling Miriam. "You must get another heart because the goddess—and she is a

goddess, bless her!—who has taken yours belongs to a different heaven to the one you expect to go to. She is Miriam Serkovski, daughter of the *podratchik* —a Jewess, Gospodin Yuri, and therefore, according to your lights, an infidel. And I wish that the whole world were peopled with such infidels as she!"

"The daughter of Jacov Serkovski?" Yuri exclaimed incredulously. "But he was only a common soldier and——"

"And an uncommon good man, Gospodin Yuri," Anna broke in with a flash of temper. "A better man perhaps than even Baron von Belaieff, *Politzmaister*."

"We need make no comparisons," said Yuri with admirable composure.

Anna felt reproved, and was ashamed that she had let her temper get the better of her.

"I'm sorry I said that," she admitted.

"It is nothing," said Yuri, and relapsed into silence. Anna's hasty words had brought home to him the hopelessness of his infatuation. She had mentioned his father, and Yuri tried to imagine what the proud old Baron would think of his son if he knew that he was seeking only the acquaintance of the daughter of the Jewish *podratchik*. Anna looked at the boy sympathetically; she also was thinking—what would Jacov Serkovski say if it were suggested to him that his daughter should marry a Christian?

"Ach, these creeds and dogmas and social distinctions!" she exclaimed indignantly. "It is they that are the devil and hell, and they make slaves of the whole world!"

Yuri looked up at her rebelliously.

"Why should we serve them?" he demanded. "Why should a man be bound down by conventions which are repugnant to his higher nature?"

"That is a question, Gospodin Yuri," said Anna, "which you had better ask your father the Baron."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GOVERNOR ENTERTAINS.

THE Schloss of the Governor of State of Courland is beautifully situated on the Aa. It is a solid stone building, and it is said to have a window for every day in the year. The front of the Schloss faces boldly to the river, but the ground slopes away at the back; here the gardens are situated and a fine park, which is open twice a week to the public. A military band performs for the delectation of the people in an ornamental band-stand near the river; and close to it, in a small enclosure, is the private pavilion of his Excellency the Governor, overlooking the landing stage where the paddle-wheeled steamers which ply between Jelgava and Doubleton, a little seaside village on the Baltic, discharge their passengers.

The Governor, Baron von Raabe, was a kindly old man, who for many years had occupied the position of Governor of State to the satisfaction of the mixed population of Courland. He was fond of the people,

and delighted to sit in his pavilion, on the days when the park was open to the public, and watch the children playing in the grass, and the crowds of passengers hurrying to catch the steamboat at the pier. He was glad to receive his friends in the pavilion without ceremony on these days. Amongst his most frequent visitors were the *Politzmaister* and his wife. The von Raabes and the von Belaieffs were very old friends, and the Governor always extended the heartiest welcome to them. Yuri Belaieff, who was his godson, was a particular favourite with the old Baron. He knew the whole story of the boy's short army career, and he respected him for the firmness and courage which he had shown in refusing to violate his conscience.

"You did quite rightly, Yurka, my boy," he had said to him. "But if we all had such tender consciences there would be no officials in Russia. Conscience and official responsibility will not run in harness together, and therefore your father is wise to put you to another profession. We must always do what we think to be right; but it is as well not to think too much."

Yuri Belaieff was sitting with the Governor in his pavilion on the day following his interview with Anna Paskevitch. The steamer was lying alongside the pier, and the captain, a man of vast self-importance in a showy uniform, swaggered up and down the bridge tugging his great, fair moustache. The first bell for the warning of intending passengers rang, and the people on the pier began to ascend the gangway and go on board.

"Give me your arm, Yurka," said the old Governor,

whose gout troubled him not a little, "and let us go and see the steamer start."

Yuri helped the old man to his feet and supported him down the path to the railing which shut off the Governor's private grounds from the landing stage. There were yet ten minutes before the departure of the steamer, and the people were still coming down the road towards the pier. Amongst these late arrivals were Eric Antacolski and Fräulein Erard. The great violinist carried a small bag in one hand and his violin in the other; he was going to Doubleton for a few days' rest before quitting Russia for Berlin, and Fräulein Erard had come to see him off.

Yuri recognised Antacolski in the distance and called the Governor's attention to him.

"I should like to make his acquaintance," the Baron said. "Go down to the steamer, Yurka, and tell the captain that he is to wait until I give him orders to start. And then tell Herr Antacolski that the Governor of Courland desires the honour of his acquaintance."

Yuri hastened to carry out the Governor's instructions; and returned in a few minutes with Eric Antacolski and Fräulein Erard. The Governor shook hands with the violinist and complimented him warmly on his playing.

"I hope you are not leaving Jelgava, Gospodin Antacolski,' he said, glancing at the bag in the artiste's hand. "I had intended to ask you to play for me at the Palace."

"Your Excellency is very kind," Antacolski replied; "but I regret that it is impossible. I am going to Doubleton for a few days' rest, and then I return to

Berlin. But there is so great musical talent in Jelgava that I am certain Your Excellency will be able to arrange for a concert without my poor assistance," Antacolski concluded, bowing.

"You flatter us, I am afraid," the Governor answered; "we are dependent for most of our music on the military bands."

"Indeed, I assure Your Excellency that what I said is true. I have found in Jelgava musical talent of a very high order."

"Then there must be some amongst us who are hiding their light under bushels. Who are they, Gospodin?"

"May I present to Your Excellency Fräulein Erard," said Antacolski, turning towards his companion. "Fräulein Erard was a fellow student with me at the Berlin Conservatoire—she plays the piano divinely. And as for the violin, I have seldom listened to a more talented amateur than Fräulein Erard's pupil, Miriam Serkovski."

Yuri, who was standing by the side of the Governor, suddenly became interested in the conversation.

"Miriam Serkovski!" he exclaimed almost involuntarily. "She is the daughter of 'Nash Jacov,' the *podratchik*."

"Ah, yes, of course," said the Governor, who had never heard of Miriam Serkovski. "Well, Gospodin Antacolski, I must not detain you longer," he continued, extending his hand to the violinist. "I am much obliged to you for telling me where to look for musical talent in our old city; and I am delighted to have made your acquaintance."

When Antacolski and his companion had left them,

Yuri turned to his god-father and urged him eagerly to give a concert at the Palace, at which only local talent should be represented.

"And you must ask me to it, sir," he concluded persuasively.

The Governor laughed good-humouredly.

"We must see about it, Yurka," he said. "But it is quite likely that old Serkovski would object to his daughter playing at the Palace. One never quite knows where one stands with the Jews."

"We could find out that from Fräulein Erard," Yuri suggested. "Shall I go and ask her to speak to you about it? She is just leaving the pier."

Before the old Governor could stop him, Yuri ran down to the landing stage and returned with Fräulein Erard. When she left His Excellency's presence, a quarter of an hour later, it was practically arranged that Miriam Serkovski and herself should play at the Governor's Palace at his next reception.

"Nash Jacov" raised no objection to his daughter and her governess playing for the Governor if General Bulvanoff would escort them. For himself, he never accepted the hospitality of Christians, for in the matter of religious observances he was very strict; but he had a great respect for those in authority, whatever might be their creeds, and he was very proud of his daughter's accomplishments. Therefore he was flattered by the invitation which the Governor of State had given to Miriam and Fräulein Erard to play at the Palace.

The eventful evening arrived and Miriam with her violin, and Fräulein Erard carrying a portfolio of music, entered the carriage which the Governor had

sent for them, accompanied by Baron Bulvanoff in full uniform. It was a great event in the life of the young Jewess. She had been brought up with the stern sense of duty that characterises the education of Hebrew girls, and though she was adored by her father and given every advantage in education that money could procure, her pleasures in life had hitherto been limited to the companionship of her own people and their immediate circle of friends. To-night she felt that she was making an excursion into an unknown region, peopled by beings of a different world from her own. The glamour of rank and circumstance, of belted knights and peerless dames, of full-frocked dignity and the pageantry of power could not but exercise a strong fascination on a girl in Miriam's condition of life. The excitement of this first expedition into an undiscovered world heightened the colour in her cheeks and the brightness of her eyes. When she entered the reception room, crowded with men in gorgeous uniforms and women clad in costly raiment and decked with jewels, her simple radiant beauty attracted general attention. The Governor had given no hint that there was to be any departure from the ordinary routine of his official receptions, and the presence of this beautiful unknown girl caused a great deal of speculation amongst the guests. Who was she?

The old Governor received her with the utmost courtesy, and calling to Yuri Belaieff, who was standing close to him, he introduced him to the two ladies, and requested him to act as their escort, whilst he exchanged civilities with General Bulvanoff.

This was the moment to which Yuri had been look-

ing forward for the last fortnight. He had constituted himself aide-de-camp to the Governor ever since it had been decided that Miriam Serkovski and Fräulein Erard should be asked to play at His Excellency's reception; and he had insisted that he should take charge of them during the function. His opportunity had arrived at last; and giving his arm to Miriam, he relegated Fräulein Erard to the charge of a member of His Excellency's personal staff.

The moments spent with her were delirious and short lived. He said nothing that could not have been uttered before an audience; and yet he seemed to attain to an indefinable point of good-fellowship with her. She was grateful to him for making her entry into this unknown world easy, and her natural absence of self-consciousness made her a charming companion. Everything interested her; and she had a dozen questions to ask about the most trifling arrangements. But the time arrived when she was to play, and Yuri led her to the music room with regret.

All official Jelgava was present to hear her. Fräulein Erard seated herself squarely at the piano and arranged the music on the rest; Miriam played from memory. As she faced her audience a feeling of intense nervousness possessed her. The upturned faces with their critical eyes, the silence which suddenly fell upon them, the absence of those to whom she was accustomed to play and of whose appreciation she was always assured, disconcerted her. As she raised the violin to her chin her eyes met those of His Holiness the Bishop of Courland, who was seated in the front row. He smiled at her encouragingly. It

was evident that he recognised her, and Miriam gained courage from the knowledge that one at least of her audience was in sympathy with her.

A moment later all self-consciousness had left her and she was absorbed in her playing. There existed nothing now but those wonderful strains of Bach's aria which the full-toned vibrations of the G string uttered under her pliant fingers, and sent forth in mellow cadences to the four walls of the room.

Zolotnikoff watched her in ecstasy. The Governor of State had given no hint to his guests of the surprise which he had in store for them; therefore, when Miriam Serkovski appeared on the platform, in a simple white muslin dress and with a violin in her hand, the bishop could scarcely credit his senses. That a Governor of State should invite a Jewish girl to his house and thrust her boldly on the notice of all his guests was an insult to the Holy Church and to the dignity of the Tsar's officials. That was a matter which he would deal with later on. For the time being he dismissed it from his mind, and gave himself up to the sensual pleasure which her presence evoked within him. He meant some day to possess her, and fate seemed to be cogging the dice in his favour. He had already forced his acquaintance upon her, and here was an opportunity of ingratiating himself. Not a movement on the part of the beautiful girl escaped him. He noticed the nervousness in her demeanour as she came forward to the front of the platform; then, as she raised her violin, their eyes met, and Zolotnikoff was not slow to perceive that she looked at him with a friendly smile.

When Miriam had played three times, and Fräulein

Erard had given a brilliant performance of a Beethoven sonata, there was an interval in the programme. Yuri Belaieff ascended the platform, and, giving his arm to Miriam, led her down into the room, where the Governor and many others were waiting to congratulate her on her performance. Zolotnikoff was not amongst those who crowded round the Governor in the hope of an introduction to the fair violinist; but when Yuri was escorting her to the room where the refreshments were being served, he found their progress suddenly barred by the Bishop of Courland, who claimed acquaintance with his *protégée* and carried her off with a bow of the curtest dismissal to Yuri. The boy was furious with himself for allowing the bishop to supplant him. He asked himself angrily why he had permitted it; but the answer, which he could not find, lay in the strength of the bishop's personality—he had spent all his life in high-handed robbery and in thrusting aside those who stood in his way. It was not likely that he would show any consideration for the *amour propre* of a chit of a boy.

Zolotnikoff led Miriam to a quiet seat in a bay window of the dining room. The curtains which were partially drawn across the alcove, screened him from the view of the guests in the room, whilst Miriam sat in the centre of the window in the full light of the great chandelier. A waiter brought coffee, fruit and cakes, and placed a little table in front of Miriam with the dishes on it.

"My child," said Zolotnikoff, when the waiter had withdrawn, "God has endowed you with a great gift; your playing to-night has given pleasure to many

people. For myself, I confess that I was exceedingly moved by it. Music is to me the greatest of earthly pleasures—indeed, it lifts me above the earth and carries me into a realm of bliss."

Zolotnikoff spoke in low, even tones, and when Miriam looked round at him to reply, she could see his piercing eyes fixed intently upon her in the shadow of the curtain, and the dim outline of his handsome features.

"I am so glad that you liked my playing," she answered frankly. "I was dreadfully nervous at first, but directly I began to play the feeling left me. One cannot think of nerves in the presence of Bach's music."

"A true artist!" Zolotnikoff murmured, and Miriam, who overheard his exclamation, was pleased. There are so few real lovers of music; so few who can appreciate the exaltation which great music produces in minds trained to the just estimate of its beauties; so few who will not say "thank you so much, it has been a great treat," and then turn to their neighbour and discuss the sordid, everyday topics which the music had only partially interrupted. Miriam felt that in the bishop she had an appreciative and sympathetic admirer of her art, and she there and then finally decided that she liked the bishop.

"I wonder if I could persuade you and your companion to come and play to me?" Zolotnikoff ventured, after a pause, during which he had read every thought that was passing through Miriam's ingenuous mind. "There would be present only a select few who are really musical."

"Oh!—but my father would not allow it," said

Miriam in tones that indicated disappointment at having to refuse.

"Why should Gospodin Serkovski object?"

Miriam was not in the least embarrassed by the question. "Because of the difference of our religion," she answered promptly.

"But your father allowed you to play here to-night."

"My father allowed me to play at the request of the Governor of State; but I am sure he would not let me play for the Bishop of Courland."

"And yet he allows you to visit at the house of a priest of our Church. Father Nikon tells me that you are a frequent visitor at his house."

Miriam was taken aback by the familiarity which the bishop showed with regard to her movements, but she had her answer ready.

"That is in the cause of charity," she said.

Zolotnikoff smiled at her indulgently.

"And would it not be an act of charity for you to play to me? Surely, my child, we serve the same God—the God who has given you this priceless talent. He did not give it to you for Jew or Gentile, but for the good of all the world. Are you doing right in withholding it from those who earnestly desire to enjoy it?"

Miriam was silent; she could not argue the matter further with the bishop, nor enter into explanations. She looked up suddenly into his face with the intention of asking him to take her back to the music room; her eyes met his, and in the eyes of the bishop was an expression which no woman can misinterpret. A wave of crimson rushed to her cheeks, and half-fascinated, half-afraid, she rose from the seat; as she

did so she felt his hand close over hers. A moment later he was standing by her side with a look of triumph on his face.

"Come, little Miriam," he whispered, offering her his arm.

The dining room was full of people, she could not refuse to go with him before all the guests; and, therefore, with a frightened, beating heart, she slipped her little hand on the gorgeous sleeve of the episcopal robe, and together they left the room.

In the long corridor which led to the music room they met Yuri Belaieff, whom the Governor had dispatched in search of Miriam Serkovski. He came towards them, and seeing that she was still with the bishop, an angry flush mounted to his cheeks.

"I am going to hand you over to your cavalier," Zolotnikoff said in a low tone. "But we shall meet again soon."

Yuri came straight up to Miriam, and, absolutely ignoring the presence of the bishop, addressed himself to her.

"His Excellency the Governor has sent me to find you, Barishna Serkovski, and to ask if you will be so good as to play again."

He offered his arm to her, and Zolotnikoff stepping on one side, allowed Yuri to carry her off. He looked after the retreating couple with a satisfied smile.

"Yes, you young cub, you can take her back," he muttered. "I have no wish to appear in the presence of the Governor with a Jewess on my arm."

Yuri could not help noticing that the hand on his sleeve trembled convulsively and that Miriam was

very pale. He stopped at the entrance of the music room and spoke to her.

"Are you not feeling well?" he asked.

"I don't think I can play again this evening," she answered faintly. "I am so sorry—I hope His Excellency will excuse me."

That was the end of Miriam's first excursion into the world of fashion. As she sat very quietly in the corner of the carriage on the homeward drive, old General Bulvanoff looked at her kindly.

"Poor little Rose of Sharon!" he said, patting the back of her hand. "She cannot flourish in the stifling air of the hothouse."

Miriam smiled faintly, but she made no answer. Her mind was in a turmoil of doubt and fear. What did he mean? Why had he looked at her like that? When would she see him again? She shrank from the idea of another meeting with him—and yet——

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BISHOP'S MOVE.

THREE months had elapsed since the arrival of Zolotnikoff in Jelgava. Time enough for the new bishop to form an opinion on the needs and shortcomings of his See, and to write a report to his master, the Procurator of the Holy Synod. It was midsummer, and the windows of the library were thrown wide open, so that, as the bishop bent over his writing table penning his report, he could hear the cool splash of the fountains with their incongruous group of statuary.

He had every reason to be dissatisfied with the state of affairs in Jelgava, he wrote. Laxity and indifference to the welfare of the Holy Synod were observable on all sides. Freedom of thought regarding religious matters was carried to a dangerous pitch, and, as a result, heresies were rampant. The Jewish community had attained to a position of wealth and importance which alarmed him. They were in possession of all the commerce of the town of Jelgava,

and employed Lettish and German labour almost to the exclusion of the true Russians, many of whom were in desperate circumstances in consequence. The Chief Rabbi of Courland, Daniel Herz, was an exceedingly dangerous man, and he had reason to believe that he was disaffected towards the Tsar. He regarded the attitude of the Jews with so great apprehension that he had appointed certain persons to watch their movements, and to report on them from time to time. The reports which he had received from this source fully confirmed his fears, that the Jews were undermining the government of the Tsar.

It was with extreme regret that he had to report that the Governor of State was in a large measure responsible for the existing state of affairs. He was a man who, by his weakness and indulgence, encouraged the undesirable elements in the community, treating all people and creeds on an equal footing, and even going so far as to invite Jews to be present at his official receptions. So long as the Governor of State persisted in these practices it was impossible to hope for any improvement in the condition of the Duchy of Courland.

Zolotnikoff leant back in his chair and read over the report which he had written. Here and there he altered a word or touched up a phrase, until he was satisfied with the result. Then he rang the hand-bell on the table, and gave the report into the hands of the secretary who answered the summons, to be copied.

"Gospodin Trubman is waiting for an interview with Your Holiness," the secretary announced, as he gathered the sheets of paper together.

"You can show him in at once," said the bishop.

Kotke Trubman, hat in hand, entered the presence of His Holiness, and stood before the writing table with an unctuous expression on his smug face. He was a man of about forty, plump and well dressed, with a heavy gold watch chain, and rings on several of his fingers.

Zolotnikoff regarded him as a loathsome excrescence on the face of humanity; but everything has its uses—even a social blister like Kotke Trubman.

"Have you carried out my instructions as regards the Jewish schools?" Zolotnikoff asked, without looking up at the man.

"Yes, Your Holiness, I inspected the Talmud *Thoras* in the Jewish quarters of the town. I found them in a filthy dirty state, Your Holiness; the children were huddled together in an insanitary manner; dirt and disorder were everywhere observable, Your Holiness."

Zolotnikoff made a note on the paper before him.

"And as to the state of the streets?"

"Quite deplorable, Your Holiness!" said Kotke glibly. "The highways through that part of the town are cracked and sunken, and the refuse from the houses is rotting in the thoroughfare. The road to Oolai, too, is in a very bad state."

"Why have they not been repaired? Did you make any enquiries?"

"There appears to be a dearth of labour in Jelgava, Your Holiness. The Jews will not work themselves, and all the Letts and Germans are employed in other capacities."

"Then you infer that the supply of labour is not

equal to the demand?" Zolotnikoff surmised, still making notes on the paper in front of him.

"Precisely, Your Holiness."

"And there would be room for more workmen in Jegava?"

"There would be plenty of work for hundreds more," said Kotke.

"They could be drafted into the town from Vitebsk?" the bishop suggested.

"Certainly, Your Holiness."

"And supposing that it were arranged that five hundred moujiks under their *starostas* should come from Vitebsk, do you think that the local authorities would employ them on the roads?"

"I cannot say, Your Holiness," said Kotke, with a somewhat puzzled expression on his face—he could not as yet see the drift of the bishop's questions. "It is possible that if they were Russians they would not be employed," he added, thinking to give the bishop an opening.

"They would all be Russians from Vitebsk," Zolotnikoff replied. "Their presence in the town would not, I suppose, cause any friction with the local workmen—or the Jews, since there is a dearth of labour?"

Kotke's eyes narrowed to two intelligent slits; he was beginning to grasp the bishop's meaning, and his quick brain devised a means of assisting His Holiness out of a difficulty.

"If they were kept together in their *artels*, and quartered in the old sawmills just outside the town, they could be easily managed. It could probably be arranged with the commanding officer of the 21st Regiment, for the services of Quartermaster

Struganoff to take charge of them, until work was found for them."

Zolotnikoff looked up at Kotke Trubman standing in front of his writing table and said meaningly:

"Work, of some sort or other, will have to be found for them."

Kotke's shifty eyes avoided the piercing glance of the bishop, and his hands fumbled nervously with his hat.

"Your Holiness, I will personally undertake that they find work. When will they arrive?"

Zolotnikoff turned to the pages of a small calendar on the table beside him, and opened it at the month of September.

"They will arrive at the end of the first week in September," he said, making a note of the date. "You will arrange matters with Quartermaster Struganoff."

Kotke bowed himself out of the room, and Zolotnikoff rang for his secretary.

"I wish you to write a letter to *Stephenhagen's Gazette* calling attention to the shocking condition of the roads in the Jewish quarter of the town, and to the insanitary state of their schools. These things are a danger to the public, and the Chief Rabbi is much to blame for permitting such a state of affairs to exist. Gospodin Trubman will give you the particulars. I also want to see Father Nikon Paskevitch at once."

Interviews with the great member of the Holy Synod had ceased to be a terror to Father Nikon since they were of frequent occurrence. He regarded himself as a man of great importance, enjoying the

confidence of his bishop, and he assumed airs in public which he considered in keeping with his exalted position. It was only in his own home that he was reminded of his ignorance and stupidity—Anna never let an opportunity slip of bringing them to his notice, "for his own good," she said.

Father Nikon crossed himself before the icon, kissed the hem of the bishop's robe, and gave him the customary salutation, as he had done a dozen times during the last three months.

"Sit down, Father Nikon," said Zolotnikoff. The pope meekly took the chair which the bishop indicated and awaited orders.

"In September there will be five hundred moujiks coming to Jelgava. They will be accommodated with shelter at the old sawmill on the north of the town, until they have procured work on the roads, and lodgings for themselves. You will be in charge of their spiritual welfare, and you will visit them daily at the mill."

"It shall be done, Your Holiness."

"I need not impress upon you, Father Nikon," the bishop continued, "the great responsibility which this extra charge throws upon you, and you will be remunerated accordingly. These men, and there may be some boys amongst them, are coming from Vitebsk to Jelgava for the improvement and beautifying of our town, and they must not be allowed to suffer persecution at the hands of the Jews near whom they will be dwelling. It will be your duty to warn them against intimacy with their Jewish neighbours, and that they would be wise not to enter that quarter of the town singly at night. I would remind you that

the Jewish Day of Atonement takes place in September—a ceremony at which sacrifices are offered on the altar—you know what that means."

Father Nikon turned deadly pale. Zolotnikoff had succeeded in terrifying the wretched creature with his grisly insinuations as he had done at his first interview with the pope. It would only be necessary to give him a final reminder of the abominable practice of the Jews just before the arrival of the moujiks in Jelgava, and Father Nikon could then be trusted to pass the story on to the ignorant peasants.

"One thing more, Father Nikon," Zolotnikoff continued after a pause. "This Jewish woman who visits at your house—I understand that she is the daughter of Jacov Serkovski—I wish to see her, to arrange for her to play the violin at a concert for charitable purposes. At what hour does she usually come to your house?"

"Your Holiness," Father Nikon answered, "Miriam Serkovski shall come to your palace—I will bring her."

Zolotnikoff knew full well that Father Nikon was promising what he could not perform, and he became impatient.

"I should be obliged if you would answer my question, Father Nikon. At what hour can I expect to see the woman at your house?"

"She comes every Friday afternoon, at about four o'clock, Your Holiness, and sometimes in the mornings of other days. But Friday afternoon always."

"Then I shall come to your house on Friday, and I shall expect to see her there."

Zolotnikoff opened a drawer and taking notes for fifty roubles from it, handed them to Father Nikon.

"I mentioned that you would be remunerated for the extra work which the arrival of these men from Vitebsk will entail upon you. This is for payment in advance. And don't forget, Father Nikon, that I shall visit your house on Friday afternoon. For the rest—silence is all that I demand of you."

When Father Nikon eventually reached his home he was half fuddled with *vodka*. This fresh access to fortune had entailed a copious celebration at the *traktir*. The Holy Mother and all the saints had libations poured to them down the throat of the joyful priest, and His Holiness the Bishop was added to the calendar of saints with a final solemn potation. Then he went home, and bursting into the kitchen, threw his arms round Anna, and, between tears and laughter, told her of his wealth, and slapped the notes triumphantly on the table.

"Nikon Paskevitch," said Anna severely, leaning her hands on the table and looking straight into the face of her drunken spouse, "where did you get that money?"

"Before the Holy Mother, I did not steal it!" the priest exclaimed, cowering beneath her gaze. He had thought that Anna would be pleased with the money, and he could not understand why she looked so angry.

"I know that you did not steal it, Nikon," she answered proudly. "But you will tell me how you got it."

The priest wrung his hands and began to blubber. "I cannot tell you, Anna, indeed I cannot."

"Two months ago," Anna continued, without noticing the distress of the unfortunate Nikon, "you came home from the bishop's palace with a new dress

for me and presents for the children, and now you bring back fifty roubles. What does it mean, Nikon?"

"Do not ask me, Anna, to tell you now. Some day I will tell you all; but I must not yet."

"You will tell me where and how you got that money, Nikon, or I will go straight away from you and take the children with me."

Father Nikon covered his face with his hands and sobbed aloud. For a moment Anna stood still looking at him regretfully. Then, with a sigh, she turned and left the room.

Father Nikon could hear her in the next room busying herself with the children; and in a few minutes she returned with the baby wrapped in a shawl in her arms, and little Vera in her out-door clothes hanging on to her skirt.

"I am going," she announced curtly. "Good-bye, Nikon."

The priest looked up at her miserably. He knew full well that Anna never threatened what she was not prepared to perform. She would go away and take the children from him, and he would not see them any more.

"Don't go, Anna," he gasped. "I will tell you everything. There is nothing wrong, only His Holiness said that I must not speak about it yet."

"What did he give you the money for?" Anna demanded, still standing in the doorway.

"It is an increase in my salary," said Father Nikon.

Anna laughed scornfully.

"Come, Nikon!" she exclaimed. "Tell me the truth, or let me go at once."

"Before the Holy Mother it is the truth. There are five hundred men coming into the town in September and His Holiness has appointed me to look after their spiritual welfare. They will be put to live in the old sawmill while they work on the roads, and His Holiness told me that my salary would be increased whilst they are here; and he gave me the fifty roubles in advance."

"What else?" said Anna suspiciously. "Did he give you any instructions about these *moujiks?*"

Father Nikon covered his face with his hands and shuddered.

"Yes, Anna. It is the time of the Jewish Day of Atonement."

Anna went up to him and, pulling his hands from his face, looked into his eyes.

"What has the Day of Atonement to do with the *moujiks?*" she asked. "What did he say that you were to tell them?"

"I am to warn them not to go into the Jewish quarter during the day, or the Jews will kill them."

Anna turned to little Vera, who was standing by the door with her finger in her mouth, and told her to run away into the next room. Then she laid the baby down upon the table and putting her hand firmly on her husband's shoulder:

"Go on, Nikon, tell me more," she said not unkindly. "What else did the bishop say?"

"There was nothing more about the *moujiks.* He gave me fifty roubles in advance, and said that I was not to mention it. But you must have the house in order on Friday, because His Holiness is going to honour us with a visit."

"That man is coming here on Friday!" Anna exclaimed. "What is he coming for?"

"How should I know?" said Father Nikon weakly. He was afraid to confess to his wife that His Holiness was coming for the purpose of meeting Miriam Serkovski, though it was only to ask her to play at a charity concert.

"Tell me, Nikon, why is the bishop coming to our house on Friday? You know, and you shall tell me."

"It is a complimentary visit, I suppose," Father Nikon answered evasively.

Again Anna laughed with scorn.

"His Holiness," she said, dropping a deep curtsy, "the Bishop of Courland, member of the Holy Synod, is coming to pay us a complimentary visit! Just think of it, baby!" she exclaimed, picking up her child and hugging him to her breast. "Just think, if you can think, darling, that the great Zolotnikoff is coming to pay you a visit. You mustn't laugh, dearie. We must be very serious, for he is a holy man; and he is coming for the express purpose of seeing my little 'Dossie.' There's a treat for him! We must be very good and have some fresh sawdust on the floor, and Nicholas, in the corner, must have his face washed—all for His Holiness the Bishop. And mummy must put on a clean apron, and little 'Dossie' must smile at him—and then perhaps daddy will be able to find out why he was given fifty roubles."

Father Nikon remained silent, whilst Anna walked up and down the room hushing the child to sleep and thinking, thinking—what could it all mean? The five hundred *moujiks* who were coming to be quartered just outside the Jewish part of the town;

the appointment of Nikon as their spiritual pastor; the grotesque warning he was to give them; the visit of the bishop to their house on the following Friday; the fifty roubles lying in dirty notes on the table. What could it all mean? And suddenly she remembered that it was always on Friday afternoon that her darling Miriam came to see her.

"Did you tell His Holiness that Miriam Serkovski will be here on Friday afternoon?" she said, stopping in her perambulations of the room to look at her husband as she put the question.

The priest's face fell before the searching look of his wife, and Anna knew by his expression that Nikon would speak the truth.

"I mentioned it to His Holiness," he admitted.

"Before or after he said that he would come here?"

"He wants to ask Miriam to play the violin at a charity concert," said Father Nikon, avoiding a direct answer to her question.

Here was another mystery for Anna. Why should Zolotnikoff wish to meet Miriam Serkovski? For no good purpose she was certain. She must get at the whole truth of the matter by some means. But Nikon was such a fool! It was impossible to make him see things in their proper light. He honestly believed that the bishop had given him the fifty roubles in advance of his salary—and what could she do with a man with so little sense of perception?

"Nikon," she said at last, stopping in front of him, "that money is poison. He gave it to you to induce you to do something wrong. You are not going to do it, and therefore you cannot earn the money."

As she spoke she stretched out her hand and

crumpled the notes in her strong fingers. She took a step towards the stove, and Father Nikon seeing her intention, started to his feet and clutched at her arm.

"Anna, for God's sake do not burn them! The roubles, the precious roubles! And we so poor! Think how rich we should be with fifty roubles!"

"They are the price of your soul, Nikon," said Anna, shaking herself free from his grasp. "Surely it were better that they should burn than you—if there is such a place as the hell you are so fond of talking about."

She threw the notes into the fire, and Father Nikon, with a cry of anguish, rolled upon the floor.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ANNA TELLS HER STORY.

THE Midsummer Fair in Jelgava was at its height. The great open market-place lined with alleys of booths, contained everyone in Jelgava, or from the surrounding country, who had anything to sell, and who had paid the market tax and received a slip of paper entitling him to set up his stall in the fair and to become a merchant for the day. There was nothing that could not be bought at the fair from horses to wooden spoons; but every purchase entailed a tremendous amount of haggling, and provided entertainment for the crowds of onlookers; for the bargaining was generally conducted on both sides with spirit and pleasantry of a personal description.

On the outskirts of the fair were "side-shows." The beggars from all the churches, reinforced by a number of abnormally revolting deformities from the neighbouring villages, sat in rows in front of the Town Hall. There was no charge for inspecting their hideous defects of limb or organ, but a blessing could always be procured from them for a few kopeks. A circus, whose *personnel* consisted of three horses

and a couple of mangy bears, was advertised as a full hippodrome, and visitors were invited to enter by a gentleman beating a drum and a young lady in scanty attire with painted cheeks. Near by, a sad-faced *moujik* strummed on a *balolaica*, a triangular wooden instrument with three strings, and sang indecorous songs, to the huge delight of a group of soldiers and a few giggling women. A table of marionettes in soiled dresses, representing scenes from the life of Peter the Great, occupied the next space, and beyond it was a stall of secondhand clothes, hanging uninvitingly from a cross-tree above the bench. The vendor was apparently aware of the unattractive appearance of his wares, for he frequently uplifted his voice to call attention to their neglected excellence. He held in his hand a long military coat with tinselled epaulettes.

"There is no other coat like this one in all Russia," he shouted hoarsely. "It is the coat which Napoleon, the Frenchman, wore when he entered Moscow. This coat cost, when new, five hundred roubles, but I will sacrifice it for seventy-five kopeks."

Three stalls away was another vendor of clothes. He could hear the raucous voice of his competitor and entered the lists against him.

"A pair of trousers," he shouted, holding the garments up to view, "once the property of Ivan Velikie; but when the saint was received up into heaven he dropped them from the clouds. They are heavenly breeches, and the price is only thirty-five kopeks!"

Two Jewish women stood in front of a booth on which was exhibited a fascinating length of dress material. Each looked at it covetously and then

passed on her way; only to return and gaze once more at the inviting stuff. At last one of them summoned up courage and demanded the price.

"You can move on," said the other, elbowing her neighbour from the stall. "I have been considering that dress for the last two hours."

"What has it to do with you?" came the retort. "I have no time to walk the streets for two hours. I have left my children at home, and I shall buy just what suits me without your permission."

"Your children, indeed! Why, it is well known that your daughters are keeping company with *Shaigotzim* (Christian boys)."

"You can leave my daughters alone and look after your own husband. He is in the brothel every night."

"You should be a mother to your children if that is true!" shrieked the outraged woman.

The stall-keeper smiled quietly to himself, and doubled the price of the length of dress material. And when, at last, as a crowning insult, one of the women turned and demanded the cost of it, the stall-keeper got his full price without bargaining—and the purchaser was revenged.

But there was one woman who hurried down the broad avenue of booths without noticing the tempting wares which were exposed for sale, and paying no heed to the seductive words of the stall-keepers. She held a child in her arms wrapped in a light shawl, and every now and again she looked lovingly down at the little one who whimpered fitfully, saying:

"Hush, dearie, hush! we must find him, even if we have to ring at the door of his father's house."

And so she came to the low stone wall by the river,

and for a moment sat down to rest upon it, rearranging the shawl over her little one, and crooning a song to him, as she watched the great wheel churning the water in the mill-lade. Then she hastened on once more, and turning into Palace Street, finally stopped before a door with a brass plate upon it, bearing the inscription, "Baron Alexander von Belaieff, Politzmaister." She rang the bell, and a uniformed servant answered the summons.

"Is the young Baron, Yuri, at home?" she asked breathlessly. The man looked her over critically and decided that she was not deserving of consideration; so he gave her an impudent reply, and was about to shut the door in her face.

"Stop a minute, my friend!" the woman exclaimed, thrusting out a strong arm against the half-closed door. "If the young Baron is in you had better take word to him that Anna Paskevitch is anxious to see him. If you do not, you will find it necessary to explain to His Highborn later why you refused."

The man looked at her in astonishment; she appeared little better than a beggar-woman, and yet he was afraid of her.

"Come inside," he muttered ungraciously, closing the door behind her. He left her standing in the hall, and in a few minutes returned, and with an obsequious bow, requested her to follow him to the library.

Yuri Belaieff came forward when she entered, and shook hands with her.

"What can I do for you, Anna Ivanovna?" he said pleasantly.

"Nothing for me, thank you, Gospodin Yuri; but there is something you can do for Miriam Serkovski and for all the Jews in Jelgava, unless I have made a great mistake."

"Miriam Serkovski!" Yuri exclaimed.

Anna laughed softly.

"Yes, for Miriam Serkovski," she repeated. "I thought that you would be interested."

"Tell me what I can do," he demanded eagerly.

"You can listen to me, Gospodin Yuri, and when you have heard what I have to say, you can decide for yourself what you are to do."

Yuri brought a chair for her, and Anna sat down with her baby on her lap.

"Now tell me," he said, standing by the open window which looked out across the river.

"My husband is ordered to attend His Holiness the Bishop about once a week," said Anna, going straight to the point. "About two months ago he returned from the Palace with a new dress for me and presents for the children. Yesterday he came back with fifty roubles in notes. I didn't like it, and I asked him how he came by so much money. Of course I knew that he had not stolen it," she added hastily, to prevent any false impressions. "But Nikon is simple-minded, and I thought that he could not have come by so much money rightly. He told me that the bishop had given it to him, but that he was to say nothing about it. Nikon thinks that his salary is to be increased, because five hundred *moujiks* from Vitebsk are coming into Jelgava to work on the roads, and the bishop told him that he is to look after their 'spiritual welfare.' I notice that

'spiritual welfare' and roubles always go together. Do you know anything about these five hundred *moujiks*, Gospodin Yuri?"

The boy turned towards her with a puzzled expression.

"I have heard nothing of repairing the roads," he said; "and my father has not mentioned that any *moujiks* are expected in Jelgava from Vitebsk. I am helping him in his office, and I should know if police arrangements were to be made for the reception of such a large gang."

"I thought that the Politzmaister knew nothing about it!" Anna exclaimed triumphantly. She felt assured now that her surmises were correct. "Well, Gospodin Yuri," she continued, "I can tell you that five hundred *moujiks* will arrive from Vitebsk at the beginning of September. That is the first point."

"But what has that to do with the Serkovskis?" Yuri demanded.

Anna did not deign to answer his question, but went on with her narrative.

"They are to be quartered in the old saw-mill, and Nikon has instructions from the bishop to warn them that the Jewish Day of Atonement takes place at that time, and that the Jews will kill and eat them if they go into the Jewish quarter alone. That is the second point."

"Well?" said Yuri, still entirely at a loss as to the trend of Anna's remarks.

"The only other information that I could get from Nikon was that this precious Zolotnikoff is coming to our house on Friday afternoon, when he knows that Miriam Serkovski will be with us. He wants

her to play at a charity concert, Nikon says. What do you think of that, Gospodin Yuri? His Holiness wants a Jewess to play at his concert, and, instead of going to her father's house to ask permission, he is coming to the house of a poor pope where he thinks that he will meet her. I could not understand that myself until I had seen Miriam Serkovski this morning—but I understand it all now. The fat pig has been making love to Miriam Serkovski. What do you think of *that*, Gospodin Yuri?"

"My God! Is it true?" Yuri exclaimed, turning fiercely upon her.

Anna hushed the baby, who had begun to whimper.

"Under your very nose, Gospodin Yuri," she said calmly. "At His Excellency's evening party."

"Oh, it is impossible!" the boy cried, with a vivid recollection of Zolotnikoff carrying off Miriam from him.

"He made quite an impression upon her," said Anna, with exasperating coolness. "She thinks him a very nice man; and I believe she is almost sorry that he is not a Jew."

"But she does not suppose that he wants to marry her?" Yuri exclaimed, pacing nervously up and down the room.

"It is impossible to say what young girls think, Gospodin Yuri. They could not tell you themselves, because they do not understand. They only know that they love, and never stop to consider what it means."

"But she does not love him!"

"Hush, dearie, hush," Anna crooned, rocking her baby in her arms.

"It is impossible that she should love him, the declared enemy of her race!"

"She knows nothing about that, Gospodin Yuri. She says that the bishop is a broad-minded man."

"I hope you undeceived her," said Yuri. "I hope you told her that he has stirred up strife against the Jews, and that he is a staunch supporter of the Procurator, who is responsible for the massacre of hundreds of Jews in Russia."

"Not so loud, Gospodin Yuri," Anna whispered, with a warning look towards the door. "You must not speak against the Procurator and the Holy Synod whilst there are doors made only of wood."

The reproof sounded odd from the lips of Anna, the heretic, who was fearless in her denunciation of priestcraft whenever she was moved to wrath. But she did not wish Yuri Belaieff to compromise himself; she had work for him to do for her darling Miriam and for the whole house of Serkovski—and she knew that he would do it.

"I warned Miriam Serkovski to have nothing to do with His Holiness. I told her what sort of a man he is. She will not come to our house on Friday next; and I am afraid His Holiness will be very disappointed."

"That is good!" Yuri exclaimed.

"But the five hundred *moujiks?*" she questioned. "What are they for, Gospodin Yuri?"

"It is curious that we should have had no word of their coming," said the boy pensively. "Who has sent for them I wonder?"

"That is what I want you to find out," said Anna. "Who sent for them? Who will look after them?

And what they are for? Remember, Gospodin Yuri, that they will be quartered in the old saw-mill near the Jewish quarter, and that Nikon has been told to lie to them about the Jews."

She rose from the chair, wrapping her baby securely in the shawl, and going over to Yuri, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You will save the Jews," she entreated earnestly. "You will save them for Miriam Serkovski's sake."

Yuri looked at her distractedly.

"I do not know what it all means, Anna Ivanovna!" he exclaimed.

"But you will find out for the sake of Miriam Serkovski and you will stop it. You will not let them massacre the Jews, Gospodin Yuri."

"My God, no!" he ejaculated in horror. "Do you think it means that?"

"I do not think that the roads will be improved by the *moujiks*," she answered, going towards the door. "But they must find something to do."

Yuri Belaieff followed her across the room.

"You can leave it to me," he said, with his hand on the handle of the door. "I will see to it that no harm comes to the Jews."

"For Miriam Serkovski's sake," said Anna.

"No—in the name of Justice."

## CHAPTER X.

### "SACHAR MOROJHE."

WHEN Anna Paskevitch had gone, Yuri sat down by the open window looking across the river. It was an intensely hot and still afternoon, and there was not a sound in the street below; even the clamour and noises of the fair did not reach him in his sanctum. What was he to do? He was convinced that the priest's wife had not come to him with a fairy tale; and yet there was nothing definite that he could lay before his father. He must find out something more about it before he spoke to the Politzmaister. Fortunately there was still plenty of time. More than two months must elapse before the arrival of the workmen. But he was to go to Dorpat University in July. He must explain matters to his father before he went, and, if necessary, continue his studies of medicine at home until the departure of the *moujiks* from Jelgava.

The silence of the street was broken by a low musical cry:

"*Sachar Moro-o-o-jhnee!*"

Yuri knew the cry well, and he did not trouble to look in the direction of the ice-cream vendor who was

coming slowly up the street. For in Jelgava from early spring till autumn the town is full of these hawkers, in their flowered red shirts, hanging down over their loose breeches, belted in with a broad black leather band, with their patent leather boots to the knee, and painted refrigerators balanced on their flat crowned caps. They are a caste of themselves, and profess to have a secret for the preparation of *sachar morojhe*. Their headquarters are in Moscow; but in the spring they scatter themselves throughout all the towns of Russia, selling their frozen cream in the streets and squares and reaping a rich harvest.

"*Sachar Moro-o-o-o-jhnee!*"

The cry sounded louder, for the man was coming towards the house. Yuri was irritated by it; he had other things to think about; but there was something in the tone and cadence of the cry which arrested his attention. He lit a cigarette, and settling himself down into an armchair, began once more to give his mind to the problem which Anna Paskevitch had set him to solve. By some means he must find out about those five hundred *moujiks*, and who had sent for them. Zolotnikoff would hardly take it upon himself to order a gang of navvies to repair the roads in Jelgava—that was none of his business. But apparently the bishop was the only man who knew anything about them. He must be working through some other person, and he must find out who it was. How was he to find out?

"*Sachar Moro-o-o-o-jhnee!*"

Yuri started to his feet with the intention of ordering the man to move on, for the voice was just beneath his window. He thrust his head out of the open case-

ment, and there beneath him stood the vendor of ice-cream in his picturesque garb, filling a pitcher from his refrigerator which was standing on the pavement, and chatting amiably to his customer.

"Twenty-five kopeks for the pitcher full," he said. "I supply it in any quantity and to all classes. The Governor-General sends for it in a crystal dish, the little son of the *gorodovoy* brings his tin mug and his two kopeks. They all must have their *sachar morojhe*, and we are welcome at palaces and cottages alike."

He pocketed his money, and swinging the refrigerator gracefully on to his head, started once more up the street, with his melodious cry: "*Sachar Moro-o-o-o-jhnee!*"

Yuri withdrew from the open window without speaking to him. The words of the ice-cream seller had given him an idea. Here was a man who was privileged to loiter about the streets, and who was welcome wherever he went. If it pleased him to hang about the corner of the street where he could watch both the entrances to the Episcopal Palace, there was nobody who would suspect him of undue curiosity regarding the callers on His Holiness the Bishop, and no *gorodovoy* would order him to move on. The ice-cream man might with safety and without arousing suspicion force his acquaintance upon any member of the bishop's household or any caller at the palace whom he wished to interview. If he were a man of tact, he might even succeed in ingratiating himself. Decidedly the vendor of *sachar morojhe* could be of use to Yuri, if only he could trust him. But in a matter of this importance he could trust nobody. Then he

must become a seller of *sachar morojhe* himself! Why not? Yuri was still a boy at heart, and the idea of masquerading in the picturesque garb of an ice-cream seller appealed to his boyishly romantic nature. Here was just such an adventure as his chivalrous, young heart desired, with an honourable purpose in it. Far up the street he could still hear the cry "*Sachar Moro-o-o-o-jhnee!*" He rang the bell, and when the servant answered the summons, Yuri told him that he wanted some *sachar morojhe*, and that he could send the man into his room. The servant looked at him in astonishment.

"I will bring the *sachar morojhe* to Your Highborn," he said in a tone of remonstrance.

"No," Yuri retorted shortly. "You will do as I order you, and send the man to me. I want to find out the secret of how it is made."

Half-an-hour later the ice-cream vendor left the house, very well pleased with his interview with the young baron. He had not sold the secret of his caste, but he had agreed, for a consideration, to allow the eccentric nobleman to take his place in the streets with his refrigerator and dressed in his clothes; the change to be effected at the house where the vendor lodged, and to be carried out from day to day for so long as the baron pleased.

* * * * * *

Kotke Trubman had been closeted with His Holiness the Bishop for more than half-an-hour. The instructions which he had received during the interview concerned the welfare of the gang of *moujiks* which was to arrive in Jelgava in September. The

bishop had evinced the utmost anxiety that they should be well cared for during their stay in the town; and Kotke had been able to reassure His Holiness on that point; for Quartermaster Struganoff had obtained permission from the *polkovnik* of the 21st Regiment to look after them. Kotke had seen the Quartermaster, he told the bishop, and had warned him that it would be advisable to organise the *moujiks* into *rotas* in case the Jews should make an attack upon them. Kotke further stated that he had "reason to believe" that the Jews would resent the arrival of Russian workmen. He had seen the Chief Rabbi, Daniel Herz, and, without mentioning the proposed importation of labourers, he had sounded him on his views regarding the state of the roads in the Jewish quarter, and as to whether he would approve of the authorities taking the matter in hand, and putting on a gang of navvies to repair them.

"The Chief Rabbi was most intolerant, Your Holiness," said Kotke unctuously. "He declared that no Christian dogs should interfere with the Chosen People, and that he would not be answerable for the consequences if such a thing were done."

All of which was a pure fabrication on the part of Kotke, who had not said a word to Daniel Herz on that subject or on any other.

"Rabbi Daniel Herz must be suppressed," Zolotnikoff had answered decidedly; and Kotke knew quite well what the bishop intended.

Then Kotke had been shown out of the palace by the side door; but he did not go far away. He prowled up and down the street waiting for Basil Struganoff, who also had an audience with His Holi-

ness, and who had been ushered into his presence as soon as Kotke had left. Struganoff was a long time with the bishop, and Kotke was getting weary of waiting for him, when he fell in with a vendor of *sachar morojhe* at the corner of the street, who engaged him in conversation.

Meanwhile the quartermaster was telling the bishop what an incorrigible rogue Jacov Serkovski was; how he swindled the Government and the poor soldiers; but since he was the only *podratchik* in Jelgava it would be necessary to employ him to contract for rations for the *moujiks* when they arrived in September.

"Your Holiness," he concluded, crossing himself, "if these undisciplined *moujiks* discover that the *podratchik* is cheating them as he cheats the soldiers, I will not be answerable for the consequences."

"You mean," said Zolotnikoff, leaning back in his chair and looking straight into Struganoff's face, "that it is possible that they would get out of hand and commit some regrettable act of violence—they might make an attack upon his house, for instance, and burn it down."

"I cannot be responsible for what they will do, if a rumour should spread amongst them that they are being defrauded," Struganoff answered.

"My son," said the bishop impressively, "if such an unfortunate thing should happen, I hold you responsible for the safety of the women in the house. They must not be allowed to suffer for the sins of this Serkovski. Our Christian religion forbids that the innocent should be punished for the guilty. And therefore I lay upon you the duty of safeguarding the

innocent daughter of Serkovski, if an attack should be made upon his house. She must on no account be harmed in any way; and I entrust her to your care. If there is any sign of an outbreak such as you have mentioned might under certain contingencies arise, you will at once take steps to bring the daughter of Jacov Serkovski to my palace for protection. I would not have harm come to an innocent woman, even though she may be the daughter of an unjust man and an infidel, for five hundred roubles, my son—not for five hundred roubles."

Zolotnikoff repeated the words slowly and emphatically, with his eyes fixed on the quartermaster's face. Struganoff fidgeted under the searching glance; but he grasped the bishop's meaning, and his pulses tingled at the thought of so much money.

"Your Holiness," he faltered, "no harm shall come to her. I myself will bring her to the palace."

"In the event of a disturbance," the bishop added.

"Yes, Your Holiness, in the event of a disturbance she shall be brought for safety to the palace."

"It is well, my son," said the bishop, rising to indicate that the interview was ended. "And may the Holy Mother bless and protect you in all your doings."

Basil Struganoff sank on his knees and kissed the hem of the bishop's cassock.

"Amen, Holy Father," he murmured.

When Struganoff regained the street by the side entrance, he looked up and down the road for Kotke Trubman, and eventually espied him in earnest conversation with a seller of *sachar morojhe* at the corner. Struganoff strolled up to them leisurely, and then the

vendor, seeing a prospective customer, took off the lid of his refrigerator, and sang out, "*Sachar Moro-o-o-jhnee!*"

"You can put the lid on your ice box, if it is me that you are singing to," said Struganoff, coming up to Kotke and the ice-cream merchant. "I don't indulge in luxuries of that sort."

Kotke Trubman winked at his confederate knowingly.

"My friend here knows better than to eat the stuff himself. He has just suggested to me that we should go to the *traktir* for a *stakan* of *vodka*. Perhaps he would have no objection to your joining us."

"Come along both of you, gentlemen!" the ice-cream man exclaimed enthusiastically. "It is not every day that a poor *sachar morojhnik* has a chance of entertaining two such men as you. Let those who will eat the frozen stuff, for myself I prefer *vodka*, to drink to the health of all good Christians, and damnation to Jews and heretics—and there are plenty of both in the city of Jelgava. But I hope I know good Christians when I meet them—such men as we have in Moscow. Come with me, gentlemen, and we will drink to the health of the 'Little Father' and his children—all good Russians."

It was very careless of the ice-cream vendor to leave his refrigerator standing on the pavement whilst he swaggered off to treat his two new-found friends at the *traktir*. Some children in the street discovered the unguarded treasure; and when the *sachar morojhnik* returned, at the end of an hour, for the forgotten apparatus, the lid was lying on the ground beside it, and the can was empty.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DISILLUSIONMENT.

THE Governor of State in his *Schloss* on the Aa was troubled in his mind. He sat in the great apartment which was known as his "office," reading and reading again a letter which had reached him that morning from the Minister of the Interior.

His Imperial Majesty the Tsar was extremely dissatisfied with the Government of the Duchy of Courland, the letter stated. Many abuses appeared to exist for which His Majesty could find no excuses, and the Minister of the Interior was requested to call the Governor's attention to the following points, on which reports were to be submitted to St. Petersburg. There followed a list of grievances which ranged from religious matters to the state of the streets in the Jewish quarter of Jelgava, and which followed remarkably closely the lines of the report which the Bishop of Courland had written to the Procurator of the Holy Synod. In conclusion, it stated that the Governor must mend his ways, also his roads; to which end the Minister of the Interior had arranged for five hundred navvies to be sent into Jelgava from Vitebsk at the

beginning of September, as he understood that there was a dearth of labour in Courland. These workmen would be under the Governor-General, who would arrange for their accommodation and rationing, and the Governor of State would have nothing to do with them.

The whole tone of the communication was peremptory and threatening, and the poor old Governor, Baron von Raabe, was very much distressed by it. For fourteen years he had exercised an easy and beneficent sway over the Duchy of Courland. Nobody had found fault with him—nobody had criticised his administration. The people were devoted to him, and there had been an absence of friction in the affairs of the Duchy which spoke volumes for the good nature and tact of the Governor of State. And then, without any warning, this bombshell was thrown into the midst of their tranquillity.

Baron von Raabe was not a strong man. The censure of his superiors affected him immensely. He feared to offend the Tsar; he feared to lose his office. The conviction that his Governorship had been beneficial to all classes in the Duchy was sunk in the anxiety which he experienced to satisfy those in authority over him. He feared to be discredited and turned out of office, though he was convinced that, in an easygoing way, he had fulfilled conscientiously all the duties of his calling. The fear of the Tsar and of the Holy Synod was over him, and he was deep in consideration of means to pacify the Minister of the Interior, when his secretary announced that the Politzmaister requested an interview with His Excellency.

Baron von Belaieff's face expressed anxiety and

annoyance. He saluted the Governor, who shook hands with him, and took the chair which the secretary placed for him at the table.

"Your Excellency, there is the devil to pay!" he exclaimed as soon as the door had closed behind the secretary.

"Which particular devil?" the Governor asked uneasily. "Have you, too, had a communication from St. Petersburg?"

"From St. Petersburg? No," the Politzmaister answered. "With all due deference to His Holiness's exalted rank, the devil in question is the Bishop of Courland."

"The Bishop of Courland?"

"Yes, Your Excellency, Bishop Zolotnikoff, member of the Holy Synod."

The Governor groaned. The reminder of the bishop's membership of the dreaded Synod made him more uneasy than before.

"What has he been doing?" he asked.

"He has been, and apparently still is, organizing a massacre of the Jews in Jelgava."

The Politzmaister made this astounding announcement in the most matter-of-fact tones. Throughout the whole South Western Governments of Russia massacres of the Jews had been of frequent occurrence since the appointment of the new Procurator of the Holy Synod, and there was not a highly-placed official in Russia who did not know that Jew-baiting was an essential part of the policy of the Procurator. Hitherto Courland had escaped this iniquity; but the appointment of Zolotnikoff to the episcopal See had evidently been no chance arrangement. He was

known to be a supporter of the Procurator's policy, he had declared himself an enemy of the Jews, and therefore there was nothing inherently improbable in the announcement of the Politzmaister.

The Governor wiped his forehead with a large, coloured silk handkerchief, and swore.

"What evidence have you of this?" he asked after a pause.

"It was my son Yuri who found it out. I brought him here with me, thinking that Your Excellency might like to hear what he knows about it. Shall I bring him in?"

"Wait a minute," said the old man, reaching out his hand for the letter which he had received from St. Petersburg. "I shall take it for granted in the meantime that what you tell me is true, and that the bishop is getting up a disturbance in the town against the Jews; but I want you first to read that letter, and then I will hear what Yurka has to say."

He handed the letter to the Politzmaister.

"This confirms what the boy has told me," said Belaieff when he had read that portion of the document which referred to the arrival of the navvies. "I could not understand who had given the order for these workmen to come here in September; but this makes it perfectly clear, and accounts for the fact that no notice of their proposed arrival has been sent to my office."

"Then you think that letter has been inspired by Zolotnikoff?" the old Governor asked, with a red flush of anger mounting to his cheeks. "You think that this man has been sent into Courland to stir up strife?"

"That appears to be the explanation of the matter," the Politzmaister answered.

There was a prolonged pause in the conversation, during which the Governor's anger subsided, and gave place to other emotions. It was fully a couple of minutes before he spoke again, and when at last he broke the silence, his voice was pitched in a conciliatory key.

"Well, Belaieff, you have read the letter, and you see what the Minister of the Interior has to say about my administration of the Duchy. It is untrue and unjust; but what is the use of trying to fight against the Holy Synod? The Tsar is displeased, and therefore we poor officials must alter our ways to his liking, or else——"

He broke off abruptly, with a gesture of the arms which signified the ejection of an undesirable person from the position which he held.

The Politzmaister sat looking straight in front of him, and made no comment.

"You understand me, Belaieff?" the Governor asked, with a nervous glance at his subordinate.

"Perfectly, Your Excellency."

"Then I am ready to see your son, and to hear what he has to say. I am afraid that Yurka has a habit of poking his finger into pies which were not intended for his eating. He is a dear boy, Belaieff, but it is a bad habit to interfere with other people's business."

The Politzmaister went to the door without answering the comments of the Governor. He, too, knew the responsibilities of an official position.

Yuri told his story with perfect straight-forward-

ness. He began with the visit of Anna Paskevitch, admitted, with a blush, that he had disguised himself as a *sachar morojhnik*, and wound up with his interview with Trubman and Struganoff, from whom he had extracted information, under the influence of *vodka*, which fully bore out the theory of the priest's wife. As he unfolded the whole plot, standing in front of the table at which His Excellency was seated, with his father behind the Governor's chair, his handsome face lit up with an expression of triumph that he had discovered and brought to nought this abominable conspiracy, and was now exposing it to the man who would frustrate it.

The Governor heard him to the end without interruption, and then he looked at the boy not unkindly.

"Yurka, my boy," said the old man, addressing his godson by his pet name, "I am afraid you have fallen into a big mistake. I have no doubt that you intended well, and that you were led astray by what I must call the ravings of this ignorant woman, the wife of the priest; but I would caution you against embarking on matters which do not concern you. I have here a letter from St. Petersburg which gives full particulars of the coming of the workmen whom you seem to dread. They will arrive in September, as you have told us, and they will be under the direction of the Governor-General, who is to make all the arrangements for them, and to see that they are put to work on the roads."

Yuri looked from the Governor to his father in blank dismay. Never for a moment had he thought that the Governor would question the accuracy of his surmises. Indeed, the chain of evidence which he had

collected was complete and convincing, and his father had attached the utmost importance to it.

"But, Your Excellency," he protested, "this fellow Struganoff practically admitted to me that he was to lead the *moujiks* in a riot against the Jews. I myself saw both him and Trubman come out of the bishop's palace. Everyone knows the reputation of Kotke Trubman."

"I tell you, my boy, you are making a great mistake," said the Governor testily. "I have heard all about it from St. Petersburg. There is not a shadow of foundation for saying that His Holiness the Bishop is stirring up strife against the Jews."

But Yuri was not to be so easily discomfited. He appealed to his father.

"You know, father, that what I have said is true!" he exclaimed desperately.

The Politzmaister did not look his son in the face as he answered: "You have heard what His Excellency has said, Yuri. He has received a letter from St. Petersburg which fully accounts for the coming of these *moujiks* You have been mistaken in thinking that there is any plot to injure the Jews."

The disillusionment of Yuri was complete. He had hitherto looked upon his father as a loadstone of honour; he had regarded the Governor of State as a just, kind and upright man; but now he felt that he could depend upon neither of them. His father had been convinced by his arguments, and had admitted the truth of his conclusions. But in the presence of the Governor he had gone back upon him; and His Excellency had brought forward nothing to refute his

contention but a letter from St. Petersburg, which apparently admitted that a gang of *moujiks* was to be imported into Jelgava, and thereby confirmed his statement. He was at a loss to understand what it meant, and great bitterness of heart possessed him.

"Then you are going to allow the Jews to be murdered!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to the Governor. "In the face of what I have told you, you are going to take no steps to prevent this outrage!"

The old Governor, very red in the face, looked over his shoulder at the Politzmaister who was standing behind him.

"The boy has lost his temper. You had better take him away," he said gruffly. And Yuri, with his father, left the presence of the Governor of State in disgrace.

For some distance the two walked together towards Palace Street in silence. Yuri was at a loss to understand why the Governor had declined to credit his story, and why his father had endorsed the Governor's opinions. The matter was perfectly clear, and, to his mind, admitted of no doubt. There must have been more in the letter to which the Governor had referred than he had chosen to tell Yuri. Perhaps the plot might already be known in St. Petersburg, and secret instructions might have been sent to the Governor to frustrate it, which he was not at liberty to divulge. Then he recollected that Zolotnikoff was himself a member of the Holy Synod, and he discarded the theory as unlikely.

It was the Politzmaister who at length broke the silence.

"You must let this matter drop, Yuri," he said

suddenly. "The Governor was quite right when he pointed out to me that it is no business of yours."

"But it is your business, father, as Politzmaister, to keep order in Jelgava," Yuri answered. "You will not allow Courland to sink to the level of Kieff and Odessa. It is a scandal and a disgrace that these murders of the Jews should go unpunished and unchecked. You will take measures to stop it, father?" the boy pleaded.

The Politzmaister felt exceedingly uncomfortable. He knew that what his son had said was perfectly true, he had no sympathy with the Procurator and his policy of persecution; but he sincerely wished that Yuri had not been endowed with such a tender conscience.

"You can set your mind at rest about the Jews, my boy," he answered evasively. "No harm will come to them—you can trust the Governor to look after the interests of all the people of Courland."

"Did you see the letter which His Excellency received from St. Petersburg?" Yuri asked abruptly.

"The Governor showed it to me before you came in," the Politzmaister admitted.

"Was there anything in it to disprove my statement?"

"Come, come, Yuri!" said his father impatiently. "You do not expect me to divulge confidential letters of that sort. You have already been told that this is no affair of yours, and I must ask you not to refer to it again."

"Then you will do nothing?" Yuri demanded passionately.

"I shall do what my superiors order me to do," said

the baron stiffly. "And I shall not consider it necessary to consult my son as to what may be my duty."

They had reached the door of their house in Palace Street. The Politzmaister ascended the steps and rang the bell; but Yuri turned abruptly away, and walking down to the river, sat on the low wall which borders it, and gave himself up to thought.

Presently he rose with an expression of determination in his eyes. He had evidently made up his mind as to what course he would take, and was resolved to lose no time in putting it in force. He walked quickly up Palace Street, past his father's house and the Gymnasium, and turning into a side street, stopped at the door of one of the few stone houses in Jelgava.

At one time the residence of Furst Leven, this grey stone mansion had become the property of the Gymnasium, and for the last fifty years had been used by the students as a club. As soon as a boy had passed the fifth standard he was entitled to become a member of the "Ecce Signum," and to be admitted to the mysteries of the society. It was a very harmless institution, and it had no nihilistic or other dangerous tendencies. It was simply a club for the older students at the Gymnasium, recognised by the authorities, and endowed by its young members with a certain halo of mystery and a code of secret signs, to make it more attractive—for what boy does not delight in the mysterious? As a secret society it stood on a par with a Scottish Curling Club; but as a means of uniting the students of the Gymnasium in bonds of sympathy and fellowship it was an exceedingly useful institution. Yuri had been President of

the "Ecce Signum" when he was at the Gymnasium, and he was still an honoured guest whenever he chose to attend the meetings of the society. The boys even yet regarded him as a leader, and his reputation had not been obliterated by the rapid succession of heroes which every generation of boys raises to honour.

As he stood on the steps of the old house Yuri was fully conscious of the influence which he continued to exercise over the students at the Gymnasium. There were more than three hundred members of the "Ecce Signum," all sturdy lads of sixteen and upwards, and Yuri reckoned that, with proper handling, they would be sufficient for his needs. The Governor of State and his father would not help him; he knew that it would be useless to appeal to the Governor-General; but he felt certain of support from the members of the "Ecce Signum." He passed within the great doors of the house with a confident step, and with the determination that the "Ecce Signum" should win its spurs as a practical institution in the defence of justice and the right.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE POWDER MAGAZINE.

THE interior of the little green house had been swept and garnished; a layer of fresh sawdust was on the floor of the sitting-room, and St. Nicholas had been subjected to a severe scrubbing, and the little lamp which burned in front of him was supplied with a fresh wick and replenished with oil. These things Anna Paskevitch had done, not in honour of the visit of the Bishop of Courland, but simply because no respectable housewife likes to be taken at a disadvantage in her own home.

"He may find me a fool," she exclaimed, vigorously polishing the face of the saint; "but he shall have no cause to call me a slut."

"My dear," said Father Nikon in tones of dissent, "His Holiness will find that the wife of Nikon Paskevitch is a very clever woman, and not a fool. I am proud of my wife, and I thank the Holy Mother for her."

"Never mind the Holy Mother, Nikon," said Anna, restoring St. Nicholas to his place in the corner; "but go and put on your best cassock and comb your hair. His Holiness will be here directly."

"It is odd," said Father Nikon, going obediently towards the door—"it is odd that Miriam Serkovski has not been to see us to-day. I trust that she will come, since His Holiness is anxious to meet her."

Anna dusted the seat of a chair, with her back towards her husband, and laughed quietly to herself, but she said nothing. But when he had left the room, she turned round and looked at the door which had closed behind him.

"You poor fool!" she muttered, and then hurried off to the next room, where she changed her apron, and after putting a few finishing touches to little Vera's toilet, she rolled "Dossie" in a shawl and taking him in her arms, went back to the sitting-room and seated herself majestically on the cheap sofa to await the arrival of His Holiness.

The bishop drove up in his carriage, and was admitted by Father Nikon, who showed the way into the sitting-room. His Holiness crossed himself elaborately before the icon of St. Nicholas, whilst the pope, falling on his knees, kissed the hem of his garment. Then Zolotnikoff advanced towards Anna Paskevitch and held out his plump hand for her to kiss. Anna half rose, with her baby in her arms, bowed to the bishop, and sat down again, with every appearance of confusion; but the hand remained unsaluted.

"I hope that you and your children are well, my daughter," said Zolotnikoff, looking at the poor woman contemptuously. Anna was not slow to notice the expression on the face of the holy man, and she resented it; but she had her part to play. So she controlled her temper, and answered meekly

enough, that she thanked His Holiness for his graciousness, and that they were all pretty well. Then the spirit of mischief took possession of her.

"Isn't he a darling, Your Holiness!" she exclaimed, rising and thrusting the baby almost in his face. "Wait until I show you his toes, Your Holiness!" and she hastily unwrapped the shawl which enveloped little "Dossie." "See, they are like a row of little peas in a pod. Sweet, pretty, pink pearls! Would Your Holiness like to kiss them?"

Zolotnikoff drew off in dismay, and Anna, burying her face in little "Dossie's," smothered her laughter in kisses.

"Ah, the darling pet!" she cried, as the baby uplifted his small voice. "Was he frightened by the great, ugly man? There, there, he shall not hurt my darling!"

Father Nikon fidgeted uneasily. "What must the bishop think of Anna?" he wondered. And little Vera stood by with her finger in her mouth, and nestled up against her mother's skirts for protection.

"It is very gratifying," said Zolotnikoff, addressing the pope, "to find that the true family spirit still survives amongst us. You have an excellent wife, Father Nikon."

"Thanks be to the Holy Mother!" Father Nikon answered piously.

"And a loving mother to your children," Zolotnikoff continued. Anna, who had sunk back into a comfortable position on the sofa, thought that she might have been deceived by the charming manners of the bishop if she had not known what sort of man he was. But she made no attempt to produce a

favourable impression upon him. It was her part to appear a fool in the eyes of the man whose villainy she was bent on frustrating, and therefore she spoke and acted in a manner which was justly calculated to produce that impression on the bishop's mind.

Zolotnikoff was deceived by her conduct, and ranked her with her husband—an absolute fool. But Miriam Serkovski was not at the house as Father Nikon had promised, and the bishop was becoming impatient. He addressed an abrupt question on the subject to the pope, who shuffled uneasily and declared, with perfect truth, that he could not account for her absence, but that he expected her every minute. He turned to Anna to corroborate his assertion that Miriam never missed visiting them on Fridays.

"She has never missed a Friday since my little 'Dossie' was born," Anna declared emphatically. "Perhaps she is ill, Your Holiness. I am sure Father Nikon could deliver a message to her about the concert. Miriam is a very kind girl, and I think she would be pleased to play for a charity, to say nothing of the honour of performing by Your Holiness' desire. Miriam should be a proud girl to be asked to play by Your Holiness. It should bring a blessing upon her from the Holy Mother."

Father Nikon glanced at his wife in approval and amazement. Never in his life before had he heard her refer to the "Boje Materi" in terms of reverence. He attributed her regeneration to the presence of the great and holy Zolotnikoff, and devoutly hoped that his influence would be permanent, and that Anna henceforth would remain a good orthodox Christian.

But still Miriam Serkovski did not put in an appearance; and, at length, His Holiness rose to take his departure, with wrath in his heart against Father Nikon. At the door of the house, which the pope held open, Zolotnikoff turned to him with a look of extreme displeasure.

"I shall not forget, Father Nikon, that you have failed to carry out my instructions. I require absolute obedience from my subordinates; and I will have none who do not render it."

The unhappy priest stammered excuses and apologies; but Zolotnikoff swept past to his carriage without condescending to listen to him. He was driven off to the palace amid the admiration of a group of urchins who had gathered round the magnificent equipage drawn up opposite the little green house of the priest.

"What does he eat, I wonder?" said a small boy with a hungry countenance.

"Don't you know, you fool, that the bishop receives from the Angel Gabriel every morning two golden loaves baked in heaven?" another answered contemptuously.

"Get away, you dirty boy!" cried a little miss of eight years. "We live next door here—you don't have such fine folks and carriages at your 'next door.'"

And when His Holiness took his seat in the carriage and was driven off, two little ragamuffins were hanging on to the back and making grimaces at their less enterprising companions left behind in the street.

Father Nikon returned within the house in the

depths of depression. His Holiness had threatened him—to-morrow he might turn him out of his employment—and it was Miriam Serkovski's fault! He went into the sitting-room to find Anna, with the intention of pouring out his woes to her; but she had gone out by the back door into the garden, and when Nikon found her, she was contemplating the old powder magazine behind the tangled bushes.

"The fat pig will come again and again to see Miriam," she said as her husband came up to her. "There will be no peace for us in the house."

"Anna, my wife!" the horrified priest exclaimed, aghast at her blasphemy and sudden lapse from holiness. "You should be afraid to say such things against the great bishop."

"The devil take him!" she cried passionately. "He shall not corrupt my Miriam."

"Hush! In the name of the Holy Mother I implore you, Anna. Do not call upon the powers of darkness. Only yesterday the old woman Radinski complained to me that both her cows had run dry, and when I came to enquire into the matter I found that she had used the same name that you invoked just now."

Anna glanced pityingly at her husband. Poor honest, simple fool, she thought, and yet I love him!

"Then there is the Nagiskin family," Nikon continued, warming to his subject. "Their eldest girl, I fear, will always be a blight to them. She was wearing her skirt above her ankle, and I warned her to dress more modestly before it was too late, and to bring a fine of twenty kopeks to the Holy Mother. But she only laughed at me. The next day her

mother's pig broke both its hind legs, and the rain came through the roof of their house and almost destroyed the icon. We cannot with impunity scoff at holy men nor call upon the prince of darkness."

Anna let him ramble on without interruption, she was still intent upon the solid stone walls and green roof of the powder magazine.

"It is a pity that no use should be made of it," she mused. "I could clean it out and turn it into a little room for Miriam; then she could come to see me without fear of meeting that man."

The practical mind of Anna had often been disturbed by the thought of this wasted building. But their effects were few, and the little wooden green house easily contained all their worldly goods, and so she had no use for it. But the visit of Zolotnikoff, and the dread of future visits had put the idea into her head of converting the old building into a little sanctuary for her darling, where she could sit unmolested. Anna knew that if Jacov Serkovski heard that the bishop was a frequent visitor to their house he would forbid Miriam to go there; but she could gain access to the powder magazine from the gate at the back of the garden without going to the house at all.

And so, whilst Father Nikon was taking his nap after dinner on the day following Zolotnikoff's visit, Anna was on her hands and knees scrubbing the floor of the old magazine. There were no windows in the solid stone walls, and the only light which she had to work by came in at the open door. The magazine was divided into two compartments separated by a stone wall which ran two-thirds of the way across the

floor, leaving a passage some six feet wide. The concrete floors of both rooms were coated with dirt and strewn with rags; but Anna was a strong woman and was not to be daunted by the filth and mildew which surrounded her. She started to work on the inner compartment by the light of a candle, for daylight barely reached the remote chamber through the gap in the partition. She was sweeping the rags together into a heap in the middle of the room, when her broom came in contact with something fixed into the floor. She stooped down to examine it, and found a large ring fastened to an iron trap-door. Slipping her finger through the ring she exerted all her strength and raised the trap, and, steadying it with her left hand, laid it back on the floor. From the square, black opening a noisome smell of dampness and foul air arose, which drove her for a time from the magazine. She waited for half-an-hour to allow the foul air to escape, and then, returning with a short ladder, she went to explore the cellar. She descended the ladder cautiously, holding a lighted candle in her hand, and found herself in a small chamber which had evidently at one time been used for storing empty ammunition boxes, for there were still a few lying about on the floor in a state of decay. The flame of the candle flickered in the fœtid atmosphere, casting shadows on the slimy walls of the cellar, and accentuating the gloomy aspect of the place.

At first Anna could see nothing in the cellar but the rotten boxes; but as her eyes accustomed themselves to the uncertain light she could make out a dark object in the far corner. She took a few paces

towards it, and the flame of the candle, caught by a draught from the open trap, threw a ray of light on a woman's skirt and a pair of boots. The candle flickered and went out, and Anna groped her way back to the ladder for the matches which she had left in the upper room. She re-lit the candle, and, shading it carefully with her hand, crossed to the corner where the thing lay. It was the skeleton of a woman still partially clad in mouldy rags. The skull, with a grotesque little bonnet askew over one eye-socket, had become detached from the body. The arms were thrown out above the shoulder, and the right hand still clutched an icon from which all traces of features had disappeared, only the tarnished silver halo and vestments remaining to bear witness to the sacred nature of the relic. Anna gazed at the gruesome spectacle without fear.

"It must be the wife of the silversmith," she mused, holding up the candle so that the light fell on the poor, decaying bones at her feet. "She disappeared, and he went mad. Now she is found again; but, if he is alive, he is still mad. I would rather be you than he," she concluded, addressing the outstretched body on the floor.

She turned away, and climbing the ladder to the upper room drew it up after her and closed the iron trap-door. Then she continued her cleaning operations, as though there were no such place as the cellar with its grisly occupant. She was intent on making a summer-house for Miriam Serkovski and herself, and she worked with a will to achieve her object.

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When Yuri Belaieff left the "Ecce Signum" he was assured of the support of the students of the Gymnasium in suppressing any attack upon the Jews in Jelgava. The boys had rallied round their old leader enthusiastically; and the chivalrous nature of the undertaking appealed to them irresistibly. Like boys of all nations, possessing the primordial instincts of the human race, they were spoiling for a fight; and Yuri Belaieff seemed to promise them ample gratification of their desire.

From the "Ecce Signum" Yuri went to the house of Chief Rabbi Daniel Herz and requested an interview with him. The Rabbi took the card which his servant handed him, and read the name of the young baron with curiosity. What could the son of the Politzmaister possibly want with him?

"You can show His Highborn in," he said, placing his black silk skull-cap on his head.

Yuri exchanged salutations with the Rabbi, and then came straight to the point.

"Can you give me half-an-hour of your time, Rabbi?" he asked. "There are matters of great importance and of a confidential nature which I should like to discuss with you concerning the welfare of your people."

The Rabbi looked at the boy through his gold spectacles with an expression of anxiety.

"What is it, Highborn?" he asked.

Yuri told his story as he had told it to the Governor of State; and the Rabbi, who had received no official communication from St. Petersburg, was convinced of the truth of it.

"But your father, the Politzmaister, will, of course,

take steps to preserve order in Jelgava," said Daniel Herz, when Yuri had come to the end of his narrative.

"I understand that the *moujiks* will be under the orders of the Governor-General," Yuri answered, colouring with shame at the thought that his father would do nothing, yet trying to excuse him to the Rabbi. "He is not very favourably disposed towards your people. But whatever steps are taken to prevent it, I thought that you should know what is going on at the instigation of the Bishop of Courland."

For some minutes Daniel Herz remained deep in thought. Then he rose and went across to Yuri.

"I and my people owe you a great debt of gratitude," he said, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder. "We shall not forget it, Baron. If there are troublous times before us the God of our Fathers will protect us, as He has done in the past. Nevertheless we must prepare ourselves to meet and frustrate the machinations of our enemies. It shall not be forgotten, Baron, that you have given us timely warning."

"You can expect no assistance, Rabbi, from the Governor of State," said Yuri sadly. "I have seen him, and he will have it that I have made a mistake and that no harm is intended to your people. But you have heard my story and you can judge for yourself. This Trubman and the Quartermaster Struganoff are the men whom you have to fear; and they are acting under the instructions of the Bishop of Courland. From what Trubman told me, I gather that His Holiness, as he is called, has a special grudge against you. Of course I led him on as far as possible by professing to hate your people and your religion;

and Trubman said that the bishop was determined to stamp out the Jewish faith from Jelgava, beginning with the head of the Synagogue. He seems to be very bitter against you; perhaps you will know of some reason to account for the grudge the bishop evidently feels against you personally."

Daniel Herz made no reply to Yuri's suggestion of personal animosity; but he concluded that Isaac the foundling and thief had recognised his old schoolfellow Daniel Herz.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE GREAT GULF.

FOR the first time in his life the relations between Yuri von Belaieff and his father had become strained. Yuri was in the right, and he knew it, and no amount of sophistry would induce him to change his opinion. The issue was clear and admitted of no controversy; the line between right and wrong was plainly marked, and his father and the Governor of State had deliberately chosen the side of the wrong. It was a bitter awakening to Yuri to lose faith in his father and the old Governor, whom he had regarded as a grandfather. It is always a rude shock to our ideals to discover that our *shibboleths* are only empty words, that our faith is superstition, that our gods are but mud. It is still more distressing to our feelings when we realise that the fear of man has shattered our cherished images. So Yuri was unhappy; and his father insisted that he should go to Dorpat University in the middle of July as arranged.

There was still a fortnight before him to be spent at home, and the situation was intolerable. But relief came from the *Glavnie Natcholnik* of Bausk.

The old General had taken a fancy to Yuri at the concert given by His Excellency the Governor, and he wrote to say that he would be very pleased if he would spend a week with him at Bausk in July. Thus Yuri found an escape from the tension of his home life; and in the first week of July he bade farewell to his parents and set out for the house of General Bulvanoff in Bausk.

It was with no ulterior motive that the wife of the General had asked Miriam Serkovski and her companion to the house at the same time. Miriam was a frequent visitor at their house, and it was always a source of regret to the Bulvanoffs that they could never persuade Jacov Serkovski to accompany his daughter. But Jacov was a Jew of the strictest school. Nothing would induce him to eat at the houses of his Gentile acquaintances. But he was no bigot where his daughter was concerned. To certain houses he would allow her to go; and to none more readily than to the home of the Bulvanoffs.

Thus it came about that Yuri Belaieff met Miriam Serkovski at the house of General Bulvanoff. Miriam had already made an ally of Yuri at the palace of the Governor of State, and she was delighted to meet him again. And Yuri, who had hitherto kept his feelings for the beautiful Jewess under restraint, out of respect for his father's prejudices, no longer felt himself bound by parental ties. His father had fallen lamentably in his estimation, and dragged down with him the false pride and arrogance which Yuri had been taught to regard as the privilege of the highborn. He stood by himself—a man. Free of his actions and opinions, untrammelled by social con-

vention or the tyranny of the Church, he was conscious, for the first time, of the divine liberty of the human race—of the free will which an omnipotent God bestows upon the sons of men to work out, for good or evil, their own destinies. He felt that he had come into the just inheritance of humanity—liberty. Henceforward he would be the slave of no social distinctions, the creature of no conscience-driving creed. He would not barter his freedom in the mart of smug respectability, nor pawn his soul for the flattering unction of a hide-bound priesthood.

He loved Miriam Serkovski with the pure, natural love that is inherent in all who are made in the image of the God of Love. He would woo her by the right of his manhood, in honour and in truth, and with all the confidence of youth.

He set himself to the task with the impetuosity of one who has lately escaped from the toils which held him bound. He devoted himself almost entirely to her during his stay at Bausk; until the Baroness became uneasy, and blamed her good husband for inviting Yuri to the house when Miriam was there. From the point of view of either side it was an impossible match, as she knew full well. No good could come of the intimacy which was obviously springing up between the two young people—nothing but harm, she reflected. How was she to put a stop to it? She took into her confidence Fräulein Erard, who had come with Miriam, and begged her not to leave the young Baron and Miriam alone together. But in spite of the vigilance of their hostess and the attentions of Fräulein Erard, Yuri and Miriam found many opportunities of conversing to-

gether; and the bond of sympathy between them became daily more closely drawn.

Miriam frankly enjoyed the society of the young Baron; and the possibility that he was making love to her never entered her head. She knew that he belonged to a different world from that in which she lived, and she accepted his attentions as the natural gallantry of his class, without thought of any deeper sentiment. At times she was puzzled by the bitterness of his language; by his contempt of rank; by his denunciation of the Church to which he belonged; by his vehement protests against those in authority who strove to circumscribe the freedom of thought and conviction of the people. To Miriam Serkovski this was a new line of thought. She was a member of a race which for hundreds of years has submitted to oppression and wrong without protest; a race which shrinks and withdraws itself from contact with the nations amongst whom it is scattered over the face of the earth; suspicious and mistrustful, and driven by centuries of persecution to shifts of cunning for its self-preservation; but which, nevertheless, guards and cherishes its ideals and beliefs with zealous devotion. The children of Abraham, the chosen of God—the Jews who have been made the outcasts of the world, still treasure the faith that was given by God to their forefather, and look for deliverance from the bondage of an unjust vengeance. Meanwhile they endure with patience unquestioning. It was of this race that Miriam came, and therefore she found it difficult to understand the rebellious spirit of Yuri Belaieff inveighing against tyranny and oppression. But she listened to him eagerly, and,

all unknowing, was drawn into a deeper sympathy with his ideals and into a fuller appreciation of his worth than was good for her peace of mind.

Thus the days wore on pleasantly at the house of the *Glavnie Natcholnik* of Bausk, until the eve of Yuri's departure for Dorpat University.

They were in the garden together and Fräulein Erard, whose sentimental disposition predisposed her to negligence of her charge, remembered that she had a letter to write and went within the house. Yuri and Miriam sat down on a seat beneath the shade of a spreading tree at the remote end of the garden. There remained two subjects which he was anxious to discuss with her, and this would probably be the last chance he would have of doing so, and therefore he lost no time in coming to the point.

"I am going away to-morrow to Dorpat University," he announced abruptly. "I want you to promise me something before I go."

"I cannot promise until I know what it is that you ask," said Miriam guardedly.

"It is a very simple request," he answered, "and I hope you will grant it without asking my reason for making it. It is simply that you will come and stay here, or anywhere outside Jelgava, for the first fortnight in September."

"What an extraordinary request!" Miriam exclaimed, with an expression of amusement in her eyes. She was becoming accustomed to the unconventionality of her companion's conversation, but she was still frequently puzzled to catch the drift of it.

"At least it is a simple one. Your Rabbi, Daniel

Herz, would tell you that it is reasonable, and, if he knew the circumstances, your father would wish it."

"But will you not tell me the reason?" she asked, with feminine curiosity. "Why am I to be banished from my home in September?"

Now Yuri knew nothing of the instructions which Struganoff had received from the bishop regarding the safety of Miriam. He only knew that a movement was on foot against the Jews in September, and that Daniel Herz had been singled out for special treatment. He intended to return privily from Dorpat to take a lead in suppressing the disturbance, with the help of the students at the Gymnasium; and he was confident that they would be able tc protect the Jews from harm. Nevertheless he was most anxious that Miriam should be out of all danger when the trouble arose.

"If you insist on knowing why I ask you to leave Jelgava in September, I will tell you," he said. "It is because your people in Courland are not to be any longer spared the fate of the Jews in other Governments. It is part of the policy of the Procurator that your people are to be suppressed, and with that object Zolotnikoff has been appointed Bishop of Courland."

At the mention of Zolotnikoff's name the blood rushed to Miriam's cheeks. She recalled vividly their meeting at the Governor's Palace, the fascination which he had exercised upon her, and Anna Paskevitch's warning against him, which she had only half believed. Was it possible that he really intended mischief to her people? That his professions of

broad-minded toleration were altogether false? That he was just the man that Anna depicted?

"The Bishop of Courland!" she exclaimed. "It is not possible, surely?"

"That is just what the Governor and my father say," Yuri replied grimly. "But it is a fact nevertheless. It is because I know that there will be trouble for your people in September that I implore you to leave Jelgava for a time."

"Then you think that I would run away when danger threatens us," Miriam answered, looking steadily into Yuri's face. "You think that I would leave my father and my people to their fate and hide myself. I have greater faith in the goodness of God, Baron."

Yuri felt the reproof in her voice and turned his face from her. She was perfectly right in theory; but the recollection of the horrors of the outbreak against the Jews in Kieff and of the hideous fate which had overtaken the women of Israel in that city made him firm.

"You must go away, I tell you," he said roughly. "You don't understand what these riots mean. The men must look after themselves. They are only hampered by the women."

"If we are in need of protection to whom should we turn but to our own men?" Miriam answered with spirit. "I would rather trust myself to my father's keeping than run for shelter to strangers. At least we shall stand or fall together."

"Will you consult Rabbi Herz about it?" Yuri asked. "He knows what is coming and he will advise you."

But Miriam declined to discuss the matter further. The path of duty was perfectly plain to her. She would remain by her father and her father's house; and she upbraided Yuri for suggesting that she should desert her post.

"You would be the first to condemn me if I ran away," she concluded bitterly, "and yet you urge me to be a coward and untrue to myself. Why do you do it? Why should you trouble yourself about the fate of a Hebrew girl, Baron?"

"Is there any need to ask the question?" said Yuri. "But I will answer you if you like."

He paused, with his eyes fixed intently on the girl's face. She must surely know that he loved her. If she asked for an explanation he would confess his love. But Miriam gave no sign; something in Yuri's manner warned her to keep silence; but her heart was beating fast and the blood mounted to her cheeks in anticipation of the crisis which she felt instinctively was at hand.

"I implored you to seek safety in flight from Jelgava," Yuri continued, "because I love you; because I have loved you from the moment when I first saw you, because I must love you for all time."

"Hush, Baron!" Miriam gasped, turning away from him. "Have you forgotten that I am a Jewess?"

"I have forgotten nothing," Yuri answered passionately, "but I have learnt a great deal of late. I have learnt that Hebrew and Christian are both of the brotherhood of man; that emperor and peasant alike are composed of flesh and blood and spirit; that God's service is open to all creeds for those who worship in spirit and in truth. Love, which is the

essence of our worship, He bids us extend to all mankind. What then are race, creed or social condition but barriers raised by man to thwart His will? I will be bound by no one of them—and since I love you with all my heart no considerations of the kind shall prevent my telling you of my love."

It was a simple confession of faith, and Miriam heard him to the end and loved him for it. But it took no count of many factors which help to compose human nature. It brushed aside history and tradition, and ignored the influences of heredity. To accept it meant, for Miriam, a clean sweep of all the notions that she had been taught to cherish, and dishonour in the sight of her own people. Her heart went out to Yuri Belaieff; but her conscience restrained her. The God of her fathers, as revealed in the books of the Law and the Prophets, was a very real God to her; that she was of His chosen people was a belief firmly established in her mind; that she must hold to Him and to his laws through stress of storm and in the face of the world was her simple creed.

"You have not counted the cost, Baron," she said sadly. "To acknowledge your love for a Jewess would bring ruin upon you—for me it would mean disgrace, and I should be cast out of my father's house. You must not speak to me of love."

Yuri looked at her appealingly, and stretching out his hand took possession of the trembling, white hand which grasped the back of the seat. The rays of the setting sun glanced through the leaves of the tree and dappled the shadows with flecks of golden light, which danced upon the greensward at their feet. Miriam watched the bright patches flickering

hither and thither as the breeze stirred the foliage of the tree, through a mist of tears.

"You must have compassion upon me, and hear me out, Miriam," said Yuri. "To-morrow I am going away, and I shall not return except for a few days in September. I shall not see you again; but I shall never cease to love you. Will you give me a keepsake? Something that I can always carry with me which once was yours."

Miriam closed her eyes to hide from him the tears which welled up in them, and with her left hand pulled out a white rose which she wore in the bosom of her dress. Yuri still held her right hand in his.

"The lace on my sleeve," she said faintly—"you may tear it off."

He stripped the little flounce of lace from the cuff, and taking the rose which she held out to him, wrapped it tenderly in the lace.

"It may be that some day we shall meet again," he said. "In what circumstances and under what guise who can say? I shall work at the University. I shall try to find out what we are, and why we are here. It all seems so unnecessary, but there must be a meaning to it—there must be an ultimate goal towards which we are striving. Perhaps I may be of some use to my fellows—at least there is that to live for."

"You must be happy, Baron," Miriam faltered. "Promise me that you will be happy."

"I shall be happy if I may think that you remember me," Yuri answered; "and if you will promise to send for me if ever you are in need of my help. You have forbidden me to speak of love to you; but you cannot prevent my loving you in silence. I shall go

on with my life loving you always. There is happiness even in unrequited love."

"Don't say that!" Miriam cried, burying her face in her hands. "Oh, don't say that!"

Yuri rose, and taking her wrists in his hands gently drew hers from her face, until he could look straight into her eyes. The lids were wet with tears, and Miriam closed them with an expression of pain.

"Why?" he demanded. "Why may I not seek happiness in the little that is left to me? Why may I not love you, since the remembrance of you is all that remains to me? Do you wish me to forget?"

"Oh, don't you understand?" Miriam cried. "Cannot you see that we both must make the sacrifice—we both must suffer?"

The sun went down, the shadows beneath the tree deepened, and silence fell upon the youth and the maiden side by side on the seat. Presently Fräulein Erard, conscious that she was neglecting her charge, came out into the garden calling to Miriam.

"I must go," she said rising wearily. "Do not speak to me now, for I cannot bear it. But when success or failure comes to you, you will write and tell me? Not often—that would not be right; but in the great events of life. Then I shall know that you have not forgotten."

"I can never forget," Yuri answered. He would not trust himself to say more.

Standing by the seat beneath the tree he watched her cross the lawn to the terrace; then he drew from his pocket a white rose wrapped in a piece of lace and pressed it passionately to his lips.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AT THE OLD SAWMILL.

THREE large, dilapidated sheds, with gaping sides, and sunken roofs, marked the spot where once the timber which went into the walls and floors of the houses of Jelgava was sawn and stored. A lade from the river had supplied the power, but it was now nothing more than a dry ditch overgrown with grass and weeds. For the river, winding through the level plain, had found a new bed for itself, and left the mill-lade empty. For many years the rafts of timber, which the *strugovtchiks* floated down the Aa, had drifted past the old wharf to the newer mill which the timber merchants had erected in the centre of the town; and the utility of the three wooden sheds, with the broken mill-wheel and grass-grown lade, was a thing of the past. For ten years the sheds had stood gaunt, desolate, empty. No one had any use for them; no one repaired them. Less than a verst away, in the Jewish quarter of the town, lived the man who had erected them, and who had sold them to the Government when the river changed its course and rendered them useless to him. For what purpose the Government wanted them was not very obvious, for

they had never been used since they had passed into the Tsar's hands. But the official who bought them for him was perfectly satisfied; for he had paid the Jew fifty roubles for the lot, and had charged the Government one hundred and twenty for the valuable storehouses which he had been able to acquire on, what he described as, exceptionally advantageous terms.

But now, at last, the Government had found a use for them. They had become the temporary barracks of a gang of navvies who had been brought to Jelgava from Vitebsk to work on the roads. They had arrived in Jelgava late in the evening, and had been met at the station by Struganoff. Their *starostas* formed them up in ragged groups on the platform and reported their numbers to the quartermaster. The passports of the whole party were handed over to the police, and the order to march was given. Hungry and dejected, but with the uncomplaining patience which characterises the Russian *moujik*, they trailed through the streets of the town towards the old saw-mill. The clatter of their feet on the roadway roused the Bishop of Courland from his studies. Laying aside the volume of Persian poems, with which he had been refreshing his mind, he went to the window, and drawing aside the curtain, looked out at the procession in the street beneath. The feeble flicker of the street lamps illuminated the pale, unkempt faces as they passed. They were mostly vacuous, weary faces which gleamed for a moment in the lamp rays and then faded again into the darkness, and they were very silent. A tedious railway journey, in crowded trucks without food or drink, had taken all the sting

out of them. Zolotnikoff from the window of the palace reviewed them with contemptuous interest.

"The tools are good enough," he mused; "but they will need sharpening for the work."

At the saw-mill Struganoff halted the party and called out the *starostas* for their instructions; and in a few minutes the whole gang was divided into three companies and housed in the wooden sheds.

Kotke Trubman, who had come out from Jelgava to meet the party on its arrival at the saw-mill, lounged up to Struganoff.

"They are a shabby looking lot," he said, as the quartermaster hustled the last remnant of the *moujiks* into the overcrowded sheds. "And they don't seem to have a kick left in them. What have you been doing to them, Basil?"

"Pfui, the filthy dogs!" Struganoff exclaimed. "They are tame enough now because they are hungry; and I shall keep them hungry until they are wanted. But wait until I have poured some vodka into them. Here! give me the lantern, Kotke, whilst I make out the ration returns for to-morrow."

Kotke brought the lantern suspended above the door of the nearest shed, and Struganoff, pulling out a bundle of papers from the pocket of his great-coat, sat down at a long wooden bench which had been remover from the shed to make room for the *moujiks*.

"There are five hundred and seven of the beggars," he said, checking over the returns which the *starostas* had handed to him. "I shall draw rations for three hundred. There is no work for them to-morrow—it is no good to overfeed them."

Kotke looked over the quartermaster's shoulder in

silence, whilst he filled up the printed form and signed it.

"There!" Struganoff exclaimed, folding the document. That is for 'Nash Jacov,' *podratchik* of Jelgava—curse him!"

Kotke laughed unctuously.

"Never mind, my friend," he said, laying a hand on the quartermaster's shoulder. "You will be able to settle your account with 'Nash Jacov' in a few days. But let us go back to the town now."

Struganoff rose and buttoned up his great-coat.

"You will be here to-morrow, I suppose? And the pope, too. We can't get on without the Holy Church. You had better bring Batushka along with you."

They strolled off together towards the town. Behind them the three sheds loomed huge and unsightly against the clouded sky; and the raucous breathing of sleeping men, broken now and again with a moan of restless discomfort, followed them into the night.

It was past ten o'clock the following morning when the cart brought out the rations for the gang. The *moujiks* had tasted no food for nearly two days; some boys amongst them, faint and exhausted, were still lying on the floors of the sheds unable to stand up; but none of them complained. They sat in groups in the yard, looking anxiously towards the town for the wagon of food which their *starostas* had told them would soon arrive.

Father Nikon and Kotke Trubman were already at the saw-mill. The pope had brought three large coloured prints of St. Nicholas with him, which he hung against the walls of the sheds, and exhorted the

*moujiks* to prayer. Kotke went about amongst them making himself agreeable and ingratiating himself. Then the cart with the provisions arrived, accompanied by Struganoff, and the issue of rations began. The hungry *moujiks* sat in rows on the ground, whilst the quartermaster superintended the unloading of the cart. The rations consisted of black bread and barrels of salted herrings, salt, tea and sugar. The provisions were deposited, by the orderly who drove the wagon, on the bench at which Struganoff had sat the night before making out his indent; and the quantity corresponded exactly with his figures—there were rations for three hundred men, and no more.

Struganoff called up the *starostas* and began to issue the loaves of black bread to them for the men of their companies. It soon became obvious that there would not be enough to go round.

"That diseased Jew, the *podratchik*, has been cheating again," he exclaimed loudly. "There are nothing like five hundred rations here."

The *starostas* stood by patiently awaiting the loaves for their men, and the faces of the *moujiks* seated on the ground in rows became anxious. A murmur of dissatisfaction rose from their ranks.

"It is no fault of mine," said Struganoff brusquely. "We have a Jew for a *podratchik* in Jelgava, and our rations are always short in consequence. The men will have to go on half rations for to-day."

"But we were promised the full soldier's rations," one of the *starostas* objected.

"You had better go and see the *podratchik* about that. I can only give you what is sent to me—and so it's half rations for to-day."

From this decision there was no appeal. The loaves which had already been issued to the *starostas* were recalled and divided amongst the rest. When the rations had been all issued to the men, Father Nikon came forward and, holding up his hand, asked a blessing on the bountiful fare. Then the men fell to ravenously; and Kotke Trubman went amongst them with words of sympathy for the meagreness of their meal, and with unmeasured denunciation of the *podratchik* who had swindled them.

Before they dispersed Struganoff gave out the orders. They would commence work on the roads the next day, he told them; and, in the meantime, they were not to leave the vicinity of the saw-mill, and on no account to go into the town of Jelgava. Then Father Nikon, mindful of the bishop's instructions, addressed a few words to them. He began by reminding them that they were all Orthodox Christians and faithful subjects of the Tsar; they must therefore beware of heretics and disloyal people and have no dealings with them. More especially were they to avoid the Jews, who were dangerous infidels. He cautioned them that the Jewish quarter of the town lay close by their present habitation, and that it was dangerous for them to venture there, because the Jews delighted in human sacrifices. He wound up by invoking the blessing of all the saints on them and their works. Kotke Trubman stood by, punctuating the pope's utterances with nods of the head and occasional expressions of assent. Then the meeting broke up, and the *moujiks* began to discuss in groups the shortage in their rations, and the iniquities of the Jews. But, for the time being, their

bellies were satisfied, and since there were no Jews on whom they could wreak vengeance, they soon forgot their troubles and began to sing songs and recount to one another the marvellous stories of their simple lives, and tell how the Holy Mother and the saints had wrought miracles for their behoof. They discussed their wives and families whom they had left behind in Vitebsk with a homeliness that was devoid of all reserve. Then one, whom they called Ivanka, was set up to make merry. Ivanka had served in the army, where his ready wit had secured for him the post of clown of his company. He knew all the soldiers' songs, he could dance the uncouth Russian dances, he could tell a story and he could play upon the *balolaica.*

Ivanka stood upon the bench, and began to twang the strings of his *balolaica*, and a crowd quickly gathered round him. They shouted for their favourite songs, and Ivanka responded with the one for which there was the greatest demand.

IVANKA'S SONG.

I.

What is like the beetroot ?
Hey, what ? what ?
What is like the beetroot O ?
The stupid Turkey's cap,
As it shows above the gap—
Oh, that is like the beetroot O !

CHORUS.

All the way from Skipka,
Ka ! ka ! ka !
Back again to Moscva
Va ! va ! va
Send my soldier home to me.

II.

What is like the women ?
Hey, what ? what ?
What is like the women O ?
To turn and run away
When the guns begin to play—
Oh, that is like the women O !

III.

What is like the vodka ?
Hey, what ? what ?
What is like the vodka O ?
I have marched for many a verst,
But for quenching of the thirst
There's nothing like the vodka O !

CHORUS.

All the way from Shipka,
Ka ! ka ! ka !
Back again to Moscva,
Va ! va ! va !
Send my soldier home to me.

The song met with tumultuous applause, and Ivanka had to sing many *encore* verses, in which the comparisons ranged over a varied field of subjects, but always returned to the same conclusion, that "there is nothing like the vodka O!"

Wandering aimlessly among the groups of men who listened to Ivanka's song was a wretched, half-witted boy. There was something horrible in the vacant expression of his protruding eyes, in the low, receding brow, in the loose-lipped mouth which seemed unable to keep back his tongue; but to the *moujiks* amongst whom he went he was an object of superstitious awe. He was the son of one of the *starostas*, and was well-known to most of the gang. It was popularly supposed that he was possessed by a spirit; but opinions differed as to the nature of the spirit. Those

who thought that he was an angel in disguise approached him with due reverence; those who believed that he was possessed of a devil, crossed themselves and tried to propitiate him. As a result, he was petted by all alike, and became a sort of mascot to the gang. Of course he was credited with supernatural powers. If a man broke his pick or lost any of his property he might be very certain that Tochka had something to do with it; but he could be equally certain that Tochka was at the bottom of it if he found a ten kopek piece on the road. So Tochka had the run of the camp, and was welcome to a share of any man's dinner. But there were times when he was an object of holy fear to them all—that was when the spirit was active within him, when he would emit strange grunts and hideous peals of laughter.

"Oiya, Oiya, Oiya—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Then the men would stand at a respectful distance and cross themselves, until Tochka's father led him away.

Kotke Trubman lingered the whole morning at the saw-mills talking with the *moujiks*. He was still dreadfully distressed at the way in which they had been treated by the *podratchik*. Again and again he assured them that nobody but a Jew would have played such a shabby trick on them. He posed as a man of importance in Jelgava, who had been entrusted with the task of superintending the improvements of the roads, and declared that he would bring the matter of the rations before the Governor. Then, with some hesitation, he admitted that he was afraid his appeal to the Governor would be of little effect, as the Governor was partial to the Jews. Indeed, the

Jews in Jelgava had quite got beyond themselves and needed a lesson. Kotke was very eloquent, but he was unsuccessful in raising any considerable indignation amongst the *moujiks*. Ivanka's songs and the strangeness of their surroundings proved more attractive than Kotke's diatribes. At last he gave it up and went in search of Struganoff.

"You will make nothing of them," he said discontentedly. "They are as harmless as sheep."

Struganoff lit a cigarette and laughed.

"To-morrow we draw the tools from the store, and begin work," he said slowly. "The next day we pour in the vodka—then you will see." He paused, as though he were still maturing his plans in his mind.

"We shall have to pour it into Batushka, too—I like always to have the Church with me," he continued. "And see here, Kotke, you can do more good by playing into Batushka's hand than by talking to those dogs."

"How do you mean?"

Struganoff drew Kotke towards him and pointed out poor Tochka, who was gaping vacantly at a party of men round the door of the shed.

"That's the one we want. You were an *isborstchik* once, so it is in your line."

For a few moments Kotke made no reply. Then he brought his hand down on the quartermaster's shoulder with a sounding slap, exclaiming:

"By God, Basil, you are a genius!"

The next day when the rations arrived, not only were they again deficient in quantity, but the meat for the soup was bad. Struganoff was furious, and denounced the *podratchik* in unmeasured terms in the

hearing of the whole gang. When they were marched out to work there was a good deal of sullen grumbling in the ranks. Ivanka fanned the flame by shouting ribald jests about the Jews at the top of his voice, which were echoed with angry laughter from company to company. And then, above the rising storm of wrath, rang out the uncanny cry:

"Oiya, Oiya, Oiya—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Instantly silence fell upon them—the silence of awe. Some crossed themselves and their lips moved in prayer; others looked round uneasily in the direction of Tochka who was trotting along beside his father. Only Ivanka dared to break in upon the tense silence.

"Listen to Tochka!" he shouted. "Even he is cursing the Jews, though he ate half of my dinner."

The spell was broken—a roar of laughter greeted Ivanka's sally, and thereafter the men talked and jested until they arrived at the store where the picks, crowbars and shovels were given out to them.

Kotke Trubman visited the gang at work during the day. He took an intelligent interest in the road menders, and chatted with the *starostas* who superintended the work. He was greatly affected by the affliction of Tochka and commiserated with his father on the unhappy condition of his son. He stayed for quite a long time talking to the poor boy, whilst his father looked after his men.

The day wore on to evening. Struganoff passed down the order to stop work and return to the saw-mill. The men shouldered their tools and formed up under the *starostas*, and marched off in a cloud of dust. When they reached the old saw-mill it was discovered that Tochka was missing.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

IN the Jewish quarter of Jelgava unusual quiet prevailed. The streets were empty, and the shops and business houses closed. In the Synagogues all the men of Israel were assembled under their Rabbis in solemn fast; for it was the Day of Atonement, and the chosen people were making their peace with God. From sunset until the evening of the following day the devout Jews must observe the fast within the walls of the Synagogue. Dispensation is only granted to women in delicate health, or to those who are mothers, that they may attend to their children, or to one woman in every household to take charge of the house.

Miriam Serkovski remained at home under the last condition, whilst her father attended the Synagogue where Rabbi Herz fasted and prayed with his congregation. But though she stayed within the house with Fräulein Erard, Miriam rigidly observed the fast. Never before had the real meaning of the Day of Atonement been apparent to her. In her young, innocent life there had been but few things with which to reproach herself, and they were so trivial

that a whole day of fasting and lamentation had seemed out of all proportion to their deserts. But on this anniversary Miriam was conscious of a great change. For love had entered into her life—and it was a forbidden love. She had outwardly thrust it from her; but in her heart she cherished the remembrance of those fleeting hours with Yuri Belaieff at Bausk. Every day she thought of him and longed for him—and every thought of him was a sin. She recalled the cases of many girls in the Hebrew community who had been incontinently expelled from the Synagogue and driven to a life of shame for less than she had done. There was Rachel Maintzer who had been seen walking in the cornfields with a young Lettish Christian—there had been no forgiveness for her. She had been cast out protesting her innocence, and she had disappeared from the community. Miriam did not know what had become of her; she only knew that Rachel's name was never spoken, not even by her own people. Her love for Yuri and that hour of sweet sadness in the garden were guilty secrets which she shared with no one. Perhaps Fräulein Erard suspected the truth; but she never referred to the young Baron, nor to their last visit to the Bulvanoffs. And the worst of it was that she could not in her heart repent of her sins. Where there should have been burning shame, there was secret triumph. Instead of the bitter cry, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!" her heart cried joyfully "He loves me!"

Was it not punishment enough that she had sent him away from her? That she would never see him again? Her expiation would be a life of hopeless

longing—what more bitter punishment could God demand of her?

Faint from hunger, and with her mind distraught betwixt love and duty, Miriam passed the weary hours of the day in perplexity and anguish. Nature rebelled against the Law; but to the Jew the Law is invincible. There are no loopholes of escape from its prescriptions. To deny the Law is to deny God. Miriam knew the absolute submission which her religion demanded, and she did not question the righteousness of the Law; but, in spite of all, she could not conscientiously feel that she had sinned in giving her love to Yuri Belaieff. For Faith is blind, and, wandering with outstretched hands, lays hold of tradition to guide her steps. But within every human being is a divine consciousness, incapable of error, which illumines with transcendent rays the path of righteousness for those who will but look towards the light. In faith, Miriam cried, "I have sinned," whilst conscience held her innocent.

She tried to banish the thought of her lover; but it was in vain. Every incident of their short attachment recurred vividly to her mind, almost every word of their last interview in the garden she recalled. The recollection of it brought back to her Yuri's warning appeal, that she would leave Jelgava in September. She had been indignant with him for suggesting that she should forsake her father and her people when danger threatened them. Now, she asked herself, whether it were real danger or merely over anxiety on the part of her lover. The train of thought brought Zolotnikoff to her mind—Zolotnikoff whom Yuri had denounced as the enemy of her

race. And the thought of the bishop troubled her still more. She buried her face in her hands when she remembered how once she had been fascinated by him, and recalled his words and the expression in his eyes at the Governor's party. It was inconceivable to her now that she should have given him a second thought, except as a danger to her people. Here was shame which came home to her, and sent the blood to her cheeks! Here was a sin worthy of the Day of Atonement! But Yuri? What had Yuri done or said to cause her shame?

Whilst Miriam tried ineffectually to reconcile the Law with love, her father fasted with the men of Israel in the Synagogue. With the more devout of the community he had spent the whole night in the House of God in prayer and meditation. In the morning others came and joined the service, until the Synagogue was crowded. Then the Chief Rabbi, Daniel Herz, ordered the doors to be shut, and addressed the congregation. He told them of the warning which he had received, that the persecutions of the Jews were to be extended to Jelgava, and that there was reason to fear an outbreak in the near future. He exhorted them to put their whole trust in God, and He would deliver them. He cautioned them to be careful to give no offence to their neighbours who were not of the true religion. Finally, he recommended that those who owned shops or stalls in the market should keep them closed and transact no business for a week, or until the danger which threatened the community had passed away. There was a quiet dignity and reserve about the Chief Rabbi's words which carried conviction. Having

made his announcement Daniel Herz continued the service in the usual form, and the congregation remained within the Synagogue in fasting and prayer until evening.

At the old saw-mill the storm was brewing. The rations for the third time were inadequate, and Struganoff had made this the excuse for keeping the men from their work in idleness.

"The authorities cannot expect them to work on starvation diet," he said to the *starostas*, when they came to him for orders. "It is Serkovski, the *podratchik*, who is responsible for the breakdown. It is useless to go to him to-day, for all the Jews in Jelgava have shut themselves up in their Synagogues, and are hatching mischief."

And the *starostas* went back to their men and told them what the quartermaster had said. There was muffled thunder of wrath at the announcement.

"Why were we brought here from our homes to starve? We could do that in Vitebsk among our own people," said an old, grey-bearded *moujik*.

"You forget, Dadushka," Ivanka retorted, "that the Jews can starve us quicker and cheaper than the *uryadnik*. If we are to be starved there is no place like Jelgava."

"What have they done with Tochka, I should like to know?" demanded a surly giant, sitting with his back against the wall of the shed, and his great knees drawn up to his chin.

There was no answer to his question. The disappearance of Tochka had caused a profound sensation throughout the camp. His father had obtained permission to go in search of him, and until his

return the majority of the *moujiks* reserved their opinions. It was quite possible that the demon which possessed him had spirited him away, or that he had wandered from the gang when they were at work, and would be found by his father and brought back in safety. But there were a few amongst them who had their suspicions, and who remembered the warning which Father Nikon had given them.

In the afternoon Tochka's father returned alone, and speculation became rife as to the fate of Tochka. The *starosta*, in tears, went to Struganoff and implored him to find his son.

"The devil take you and your son!" said Struganoff irritably. "Do you think I have nothing to do but to hunt for idiots. You should have taken better care of him. As likely as not the Jews have got him on the altar of their Synagogue."

An expression of terror came into the eyes of the *starosta* and his limbs shook. "Holy Mother!" he gasped, "preserve my son from evil."

Struganoff paid no attention to the old man and his prayers; he was looking down the cart road which led from the town, along which Father Nikon was making his way to the saw-mill. Some little distance behind him a cart laden with barrels approached, and beside it the stout figure of Kotke Trubman strolled leisurely.

"Here is the pope," said Struganoff at length. "Perhaps he will be able to tell you something."

At that moment Father Nikon entered the yard, and seeing Struganoff, came towards him. The quartermaster crossed himself and saluted.

"We are in trouble here, Batushka,' he said.

"This poor fellow has lost his son. He has been missing since yesterday evening. I am afraid he must have fallen into the hands of the Jews."

"Dear, dear!" the pope exclaimed, turning to the unfortunate *starosta*. "This is a sad business. You cannot say that you were not warned by me. It is the Jewish Day of Atonement. It was very rash of you to allow the boy to wander from you."

"But what will they do to him, Father?" the *starosta* cried, wringing his hands.

"If the Jews have taken him—which may the Holy Mother forbid—he will be offered up as a sacrifice—they will kill him."

"Stand up, man!" said Struganoff, gripping the collar of the *starosta's* coat, for his knees had given beneath him and he was on the point of collapsing on to the ground. "It is no good to blubber and wring your hands. Take your men down to the Jewish quarter and look for your son. I'll warrant you'll find him in the Synagogue, trussed like a rooster on the altar."

"May God forbid!" Father Nikon exclaimed with a shudder.

"Here's something to put courage into you," Struganoff continued, as Kotke with his cart of vodka barrels turned into the yard. "Call up your men, look sharp about it! There's vodka for every mother's son of them."

The news spread like wildfire through the camp. From the sheds and from every corner of the yard the half-starved *moujiks* stormed towards the cart, where Struganoff, Kotke and Father Nikon were already knocking the spigots into the barrels.

"Stand back!" Struganoff shouted, as the men, fighting and struggling, crowded in upon them. "Stand back, you dogs! and wait until the Holy Father has asked a blessing."

He struck savagely at several of those nearest to him, driving his clenched fist into their eager faces, and hacking at their shins with his feet. The mob surged back from the cart, and paused.

"Sit down!" roared Struganoff, and those in the front of the crowd obeyed. Order was restored, and the *starostas* were told to bring the cans which were used for making the tea.

"Now, Batushka," said Struganoff, holding out to the pope a pannikin of vodka, "drink to our good health, and give us your blessing."

Father Nikon took the pannikin from him eagerly and supped down the contents.

"May the Holy Mother and all the Saints protect you!" he muttered, crossing himself.

Kotke refilled the pannikin with the fiery spirit, and handed it back to Father Nikon in silence. The priest, without any ado, gulped it down, and wiped the cloying drops from his beard with the sleeve of his cassock. Meanwhile the cans were being filled and emptied as fast as the spirit would run from the bung holes of the barrels. The air reeked with the smell of vodka. It was slopped on the ground from the brimming pails. It was splashed over the clothes of the *moujiks* in their haste to dip their cups into the cans. It was dripping from their beards, and their hands and faces were smeared with it. Two of the four casks were empty, and two remained to be broached, when the cry went up:

"The Jews have stolen Tochka!"

The report had been spreading gradually ever since the return of Tochka's father; but the arrival of the vodka and the fierce struggle to obtain it, had banished all other considerations. It was not until the second cask was empty that there was a lull in the mad rush for the spirit, and then the report found voice. The cry passed from lip to lip, followed by deep-throated curses and oaths of vengeance. As the clamour reached its crisis Struganoff turned to Kotke.

"What do you think of my sheep now?" he asked. "No—don't open the other casks yet; they mustn't have too much at a time, or they will fall down like hogs and be useless," he added, laying a restraining hand on Kotke's arm. "Let them hear what Batushka has to say first."

Nikon Paskevitch was more than half-drunk, and Kotke had been inflaming him against the Jews whilst he filled the cans with vodka; so when the pope was assisted into the cart and steadied himself against the barrels, both Kotke and Struganoff knew that he could be relied upon to say the right thing. He held up his hand to command silence; the uproar quickly subsided, and the *moujiks* pressed forward to hear what he had to say.

"The Jews are accursed! They crucified the Son of God—they will also kill your brother whom they hold in their hands. I charge you, in the name of the Holy Mother, to prevent this foul murder of a good Christian by the accursed infidels. It were better that all the Jews should perish rather than this one poor Christian brother should be put to death."

Father Nikon swayed forward unsteadily, and Struganoff sprang into the cart and assisted him to the ground. Then, amid the impassioned shouts of the moujiks, he took his stand by the barrels on the cart.

"You have heard what the Holy Father has said," he shouted. "The Jews must be destroyed! The *podratchik* who has cheated you of your rations is a Jew. The Chief Rabbi, who will sacrifice your brother Tochka, is a Jew. You shall be taken to their houses and to the Synagogues. You will know what to do with them."

The *moujiks*, inflamed with vodka and the reminder of their wrongs, were yelping like a pack of wolves. There was nothing articulate in the weird sounds which they emitted, only the bestial cries of savage animals.

"Listen to them barking!" said Struganoff. "I wouldn't be a Jew in Jelgava to-night for a thousand roubles! We must divide them up somehow. One party for 'Nash Jacov's' house—one for the Rabbi's —and one for the Synagogue. I'll take them to the *podratchik's*, I owe him a score, and His Holiness has charged me with the safety of the wench."

"I'll undertake to say that His Holiness converts her on the spot," said Kotke with a grin.

"There will be plenty of converts amongst the women to-night," Struganoff rejoined. "And I don't blame His Holiness for doing his share of the good work."

"Well—here's to His Holiness!" said Kotke, draining his pannikin. "Eh, Batushka—will you not drink to His Holiness?"

Father Nikon was leaning heavily against the wheel of the cart, trying to collect his scattered senses; but the offer of more vodka was irresistible. Kotke drove in the spigot of the third cask, and placed a pail beneath it.

"The only way to divide them up now is to put the vodka in three different places," he said, addressing Struganoff. "A couple of pails in each shed will sort them out."

By this device the *moujiks* were eventually divided into three companies. There were some lying insensible on the ground, too drunk to rise and join with the rest of the gang in the mad rush to the sheds, when it became known that more vodka awaited them in the rickety wooden structures. But the effect of the drink on the majority was to convert them into raging devils, struggling and yelping for the poison which had deprived them of their senses.

Struganoff waited until he judged that the vodka was finished to the last drop; then, accompanied by Kotke and Father Nikon, who was now raging drunk like the rest, he went to the door of the nearest shed.

"Come out, you dogs!" he shouted. "Are you going to let the Jews crucify Tochka?"

A savage yell greeted the challenge. Seizing picks, crowbars and hammers, the *moujiks* scrambled towards the door.

"Here, Batushka!" Struganoff exclaimed, thrusting a pick into the priest's hands. "Take them to the Synagogue."

Ivanka stumbled forward and threw his arms round the pope's neck.

"Holy Father, lead us to the fight," he cried, "and I will be clown to the Holy Mother, as I was to my *rota* at Plevna. Hey! Forward to the Synagogue. Jhid! Jhid! Jhid! Jhidoff!"

The *moujiks* took up the cry: "Jew! Jew! Jew! Jews!" Nikon Paskevitch, the priest, and Ivanka, the clown, led them arm-in-arm, Ivanka shouting obscene songs, and Father Nikon waving the pick which Struganoff had put into his hands—the iron head half-way down the haft forming the sacred emblem of the Cross.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "TO YOUR TENTS, O ISRAEL!"

THE long fast neared its end. The sun was setting, and the last red glow shone through the western windows of the Synagogue. The Day of Atonement had but a few minutes to run when the first warning of the impending catastrophe reached the worshippers within the house of God. The silence in the street without was broken by a distant, confused noise, which gradually took shape and swelled in volume, until the burden of the cry was audible to the fasting Jews.

"Jhid! Jhid! Jhidoff!"

Daniel Herz faced the congregation.

"Let every man return to his house. It is our hour of trial. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

But not a Jew stirred. The fierce, guttural cry in the street drew nearer, and the men in the Synagogue cowered down in their places, like birds when a hawk hovers above the brood. As a body, the Jews have long ceased to be a courageous race. Defeat, persecution and oppression for centuries have had their inevitable effect. It is not by arms and chivalry that the Jewish nation wields its power to-day; but rather

by craft and endurance. The Jews, as a nation, are what the world has made them. Physical bravery, which is the boast of other nations, and the ideal of their sons, is superseded in the Jewish race by less strenuous and shrewder virtues. The evolution of the lives of the hunted travels along well-known lines. The fox might have been the king of beasts, had it not been for the hounds. There is no need to despise the Jews on this account. A day may come when strife will cease, and the virtue of physical courage become of little avail. Humanity is travelling slowly towards this goal; and it may be that the Jews have anticipated the end, deplorable as it seems to us to-day.

The clamour in the street reached a climax outside the door of the Synagogue. The Jews within, emaciated with the day of fasting, and with terror in their sunken eyes, herded together at the far end of the building, wailing prayers for deliverance. In all the congregation there was only one man who stood his ground and faced the door—Jacov Serkovski, the old soldier. Leaving his seat amongst the elders he descended to the floor of the Synagogue. At the foot of the steps he paused, and seizing the solid oaken handrail which bordered the three steps up to the chief seats, he ripped it from its supports. A fierce light shone in the old man's eyes as he made his way, armed with the oaken rail, towards the door. Daniel Herz, from his elevated position, saw him, and turning to the men of the congregation huddled together beneath him, addressed them.

"Quit yourselves like men!" he cried. "Our assailants have no respect for the horns of the altar,

and there is no safety there. Suffer them not to enter the house of God, lest they do injury to our sisters."

Several men responded to the Rabbi's appeal, and went after Jacov Serkovski towards the door. Others, reminded of their duty to their women-folk, ranged themselves along the barrier which divided the women from the men. There were but few women remaining in the Synagogue, for the exemptions from attendance for one reason or another were numerous, and many had been compelled to retire to their houses earlier in the day, faint from hunger. The score of women who remained showed more courage than the men of the congregation. They kept their places, pale and silent, and without any sign of panic.

Jacov Serkovski reached the door just as the first blow fell upon it from Ivanka's pick. It split the solid wooden panel, and the pick remained embedded in it. Jacov did not wait for the door to be battered down. Drawing the heavy bolt, he flung it open, and stood on the threshold confronting the howling mob, which hung back in the roadway, waiting for Ivanka to break in the door. But Ivanka recoiled before the old man, leaving his pick sticking in the panel. Jacov glanced round hastily. In front of the crowd, but a little to one side, he saw Nikon Paskevitch, the man whom he had befriended, shouting encouragement to the horde of drunken *moujiks* and waving them towards the entrance of the Synagogue. Obedient to the exhortation of the priest the mob surged towards him. Jacov raised the rail above his head and smote with both hands at the first who came within his reach. The man went down with a groan,

and in falling clutched at his adversary. His fingers caught in the venerable white beard, and Jacov's head was drawn down towards him. Ivanka, who had re-armed himself with a crowbar snatched from a companion, darted in, swinging it above his head.

"Hey, Father Absolom!" he yelled, crashing the iron bar down on the old man's skull. "*Hey, parshivie Jhid!*"

"Nash Jacov" fell across the threshold of the Synagogue, and a howl of derision greeted his fall. The men who had followed him out fled panic-stricken back into the Synagogue, and slamming the great door behind them shot the bolt home. The dead lion of Israel was left alone; and the jackals closed in upon him.

Down the street, twelve abreast, swept the boys of the "Ecce Signum." Armed with heavy sticks they hurled themselves upon the crowd of drunken Russians round the door of the Synagogue, and scattered them at the first charge. They followed them for some distance, cheering and gathering up the trophies of the fray—crowbars and hammers dropped by the *moujiks* in their flight. Then they returned to the door of the Synagogue. There lay the bodies of two men—the one a Russian *moujik* in his *rubashka* and knee-boots; the other was stripped naked, and the poor body was scarred and mutilated almost beyond recognition, but one of the boys stooping over it, turned the old grey face to the light.

"It is 'Nash Jacov,'" he whispered. "Those Russian curs have killed him."

* * * * * *

Kotke Trubman, at the head of the second gang, had made his way straight to the house of Daniel Herz. It was silent and empty, and the *moujiks* set fire to it without further delay. The flames shot up into the air, whilst the mob stood in the street howling at the conflagration. The wooden structure consumed rapidly, and the brilliant display of tongues of fire, sparks and smoke against the darkening sky, lost its power of attraction as it burned low. The gang moved down the street in search of fresh amusement. Turning down a narrow side street they came upon a closely-packed mass of wooden houses, where the poorer Jews of the community lived and transacted their daily business. Here, as elsewhere in Jelgava, the houses were of wood; and the leading spirits of the gang were about to apply flaming brands to the nearest dwelling, when a woman thrust her head out of an upper window, and shrieked aloud for help. A derisive shout answered her pitiful cries; but the sight of the woman aroused fresh sensations in the minds of the drunken *moujiks*.

"The women! The women!"

Dashing the brands from the hands of those who would set fire to the buildings, a portion of the crowd forced the doors, and swarmed into the houses, laughing and shouting: "The women! The women!"

Others turned their attention to the little shops which occupied the ground-floors of most of the houses, pillaging and scattering the meagre contents in the street, where the drunken remnant fought for possession of them. Then, above the din and clamour, rose the frantic shrieks of women from the upper storeys. Shrieks, which at first rent the air

with agonising acuteness, and then died down to long-drawn wails. In the bestial struggle which was raging in the houses the Jewish women fought with tooth and nail to save themselves. Reeling from the grasp of their captors, with the clothes torn from their bodies, some dashed against the windows, scattering the fragments of glass into the street below; others fought their way to the doors and gained the street, only to be seized and ravished by the horde who were looting the shops. Terrified children huddled together in dark corners of the rooms, crying pitifully, whilst their mothers writhed and screamed in the grip of their assailants, who tore the babies from their arms and flung them ruthlessly on the floor. Sometimes in the struggle an unwieldy *moujik* would lurch into the corner where the children crouched, crushing their little limbs beneath his feet, and cursing them savagely for hindering him.

A patrol of infantry, which had been sent out from the barracks when the flames of Daniel Herz's house warned the authorities that there was trouble in the Jewish quarter of the town, arrived upon the scene. But no sooner did they turn into the street than they broke ranks, and rushed with fixed bayonets to join in the orgie of rape and plunder. The officer in command laughed quietly, and leaning his back against the wall, lit a cigarette. It was a quiet spot from which a good view of the street was obtainable, and Kotke Trubman had already established himself there to watch the proceedings.

"There they go!" said the officer, waving his hand in the direction of the scattered patrol. "You see them restore order among those accursed Jews!"

"The Jews are at the bottom of it all," Kotke answered; "and they are getting a lesson to-night which they will not forget for a long time."

"Serve them right!" said the officer. "They have got beyond everything in Jelgava—the filthy blood-suckers!"

"Well, there'll be blood enough for them to suck to-night—but it will be their own for a change."

The officer laughed indulgently at Kotke's pleasantry and held out his cigarette-case to him.

"If the General wants a report on to-night's work, I suppose I can rely upon you to give evidence?"

Kotke fumbled in his pocket and produced a dirty card.

"Certainly, sir, certainly!" he answered, handing the card to the officer. "Here is my name and address, should you require me. I can positively state that the Jews began it; and that until you arrived with your patrol, they held the upper hand. I shall also be happy to bear witness to the gallantry displayed by you, sir, and to the courage and temper of your men."

"Thanks," said the officer.

"You will, of course, understand that my time is valuable," Kotke continued. "Should you wish for my evidence, and I certainly think you would be well advised to have it, I should expect to be compensated for the time which I lose over the affair."

"Oh, certainly!" the officer assented, looking closely at his companion's face. "But I dare say no inquiry will be held."

"The Governor of State may insist upon it," Kotke suggested. "He is a friend of the Jews, and if it

came to his ears that the patrol of the 21st Regiment had been unable to quell the disturbance——"

"What do you mean?" the lieutenant demanded.

"Or rather, that it had joined in the proceedings," Kotke continued, without noticing the interruption; "there might be trouble for you."

"Oh well, we need not talk about it," said the lieutenant languidly. "If there is any inquiry I shall rely upon you. By the Holy Mother! Look at that woman!"

The officer pointed excitedly down the street, and Kotke followed the direction of his hand. In the middle of the road a heap of burning furniture, thrown out from the houses, cast a lurid glare over the scene. By the fitful light Kotke and his companion could see a desperate woman with a child in her arms, rushing for safety. She had broken out of a neighbouring house and a yelling mob of soldiers and *moujiks* pursued her down the street.

"I'll wager a rouble that my boys get her!" the officer exclaimed.

As he spoke, a soldier, clubbing his rifle, levelled a blow at the woman and felled her. The crowd closed in, and a moment later a white bundle was thrown into the air and caught on the point of a soldier's bayonet. It was the woman's child.

"You have won your bet, Bareen," said Kotke complacently. "It was one of your men who finished her. You will, therefore, have to pay me only twenty-four roubles for my evidence, instead of twenty-five."

"The devil take you and your evidence!" the lieutenant exclaimed irritably.

"Well, well!" said Kotke, "if it is unacceptable to

the devil, it is quite possible that Governor von Raabe will be glad to have it."

"It is too much money," the lieutenant objected.

"It is the lowest price, Bareen."

"Oh, very well! You shall have your money. It is worth every kopek of it to see these dogs getting their due."

"You can send it to me to-morrow, Bareen," said Kotke pleasantly. "I must be going home now."

Kotke strolled away leisurely, leaving the officer at the corner of the street shaking his fist in impotent wrath. But it was not towards his house that Kotke turned his steps. He had done his share of the day's work to his complete satisfaction and he was anxious to see how Struganoff had fared. The quartermaster had led the third contingent of *moujiks* to Jacov Serkovski's house in Marien Street, and thither Kotke went in quest of him, quickening his pace as soon as he was out of sight of the commander of the patrol. He passed through the streets of the Jewish quarter, which were strangely silent and empty. There seemed to be no lights in the houses, and the few men whom he met slunk past furtively in the shadow of the walls. But though there was no appearance of life in the houses, the sound of his footfall brought many anxious faces to the windows, and terrified, piercing eyes, unseen by him, watched his progress through the streets. For the Jews, escaping stealthily from their Synagogues, had brought the news of the outbreak to their women-folk at home; and, with palsied fear gripping at their throats, they had shut themselves up in their houses and extinguished the lights, in the hope that the destroy-

ing angel might pass them by. So Kotke Trubman went unimpeded through the empty thoroughfares until he arrived at Marien Street.

The house of the *podratchik*, with its spacious yard and storehouses, was some distance from the end of the street, and Kotke looked anxiously towards it, expecting every moment to see tongues of flame illuminating the sky in that direction; for he was fully persuaded that Struganoff would spare neither the life nor the property of "Nash Jacov." But there was no sign visible, though he could hear the drunken *moujiks* raging furiously in the neighbourhood of Serkovski's house. As he drew nearer other sounds reached him—the clear voices of boys, and the noise of strife. He hurried forward in perplexity until he came to the fringe of the conflict. What could be the meaning of this resistance? He mounted the steps of one of the houses on the opposite side of the street to that of Serkovski, and peered above the heads of the mob into the darkness. The voices of the boys grew louder, and the horde of *moujiks* swayed back towards him, driven by some unseen force. They surged past the porch in which he was standing, yelling and cursing, whilst the clatter of blows reverberated in front. Then Kotke saw the uplifted sticks and the gold bands on the caps of the students of the Gymnasium.

"The young devils!" he exclaimed. "They are spoiling it all."

He looked in vain for Struganoff, and questioned some of the *moujiks*, who took shelter in the porch where he was standing, as to his whereabouts. But the *moujiks* could tell him nothing. They only knew

that they had been brought from the camp to teach the Jews of Jelgava a lesson, and that things had not turned out as they had expected.

Kotke's quick brain soon solved the difficulty. If Struganoff was not with the gang, he must be somewhere nearer the scene of action. He knew of the duty which the bishop had imposed upon Struganoff, to bring away Miriam Serkovski from her father's house in safety; and he concluded that he must be now engaged upon the task. If Kotke was to join him, he must either slip past the cordon of students which stretched right across the road, keeping the mob in check, or else he must go back until he could make his way by side streets to the upper end of Marien Street. This seemed to him the safer course to take; so slipping out of the porch he crept through the crowd of *moujiks*, and took the first turning out of Marien Street. In a few minutes he had struck the main thoroughfare which crosses Marien Street some little distance above Serkovski's house, and turned up it. Like the greater part of the Jewish quarter that night, the street was deserted and the houses dark and silent. Only one other man was in sight, and he hurried past Kotke, going in the direction of Marien Street. It was Daniel Herz, who was hastening to Miriam with the news of her father's death, and to offer her his assistance. The good Rabbi had been terribly shocked by the fate of his old friend Jacov Serkovski, and he was disgusted with the men of the congregation who had allowed the old man to be done to death without making an effort to save him. As soon as he could persuade them to depart to their own homes, he had started

for Marien Street, without any thought of himself or of his belongings.

As he hurried past Kotke, the renegade glanced at him narrowly, and recognised him.

"The cursed priest has let him escape," he muttered. "The one man who really counted!" Then he congratulated himself that fate had delivered the Rabbi into his hands in spite of the bungling of Father Nikon; for he knew that Zolotnikoff would be displeased if Daniel Herz were alive in the morning. So Kotke followed close behind the Rabbi until they arrived in Marien Street.

Opposite the entrance to Serkovski's house there was a guard of a score of students. The Rabbi went straight up to them and demanded admittance; but Kotke hung back in the shadow and watched. The lads seemed in doubt as to whether they should allow the Rabbi to pass or not; but in a moment a tall man in the dress of a *sachar morojhnik* came up, and gave orders that the Rabbi was to be admitted.

A hundred yards away, the fight in the street between the students and the *moujiks* continued unabated. Kotke skulking in the shadow of the houses could hear the shouts of the boys and the ringing blows. He was at a loss to understand why the *moujiks* still held their ground instead of going off to loot other parts of the town which were not guarded. Had Struganoff been with them he would certainly have led them round by the side streets to Serkovski's house; but since he was not with them it puzzled Kotke to know why they remained to be beaten by the boys. It was useless for him to stand staring at the house with its youthful guard drawn up across the

entrance. His presence on the opposite side of the street had already attracted the attention of the students, as he could see by their gestures. He was anxious to avoid being questioned by them, so he moved quietly away, keeping close to the wall. He had gone a short distance, and was passing a narrow passage which gave entrance to a yard, when he heard his name called softly. He paused, and peered into the dark passage, and Struganoff's voice whispered:

"Come in here, man!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE NIGHT OF FEAR.

KOTKE TRUBMAN turned abruptly down the passage, and stumbled over the legs of a man seated on the ground. The owner of the sprawling legs muttered a surly curse and relapsed into silence; and Struganoff, who was standing against the wall, kicked him savagely in the ribs:

"Be quiet, you dog!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, extending a helping hand to Kotke and drawing him close to the wall.

"Who is it?" said Kotke.

"Ivanka. He was roughly handled by these school children down at the Synagogue. That and the *vodka* have been too much for him. He tells me that he killed 'Nash Jacov' outside the Synagogue; and that then they were attacked and dispersed. He says it was by the police, but that, of course, is a lie."

"But how did he get here?" Kotke asked.

"He and a dozen more fell in with my party whilst they were running away from the children. When I broke through them, Ivanka was the only one who followed me. The rest of the beggars are being hammered by them down the road. I should

like to know who put the Gymnasium boys up to this mischief."

"It is a bad business," said Kotke sadly. "My lot came off better. They only had a patrol of your regiment to contend with; so you can believe that the Jews are having a lively time in that quarter. Herz's house gave them a fine display of fireworks; but the beggar himself has escaped, for I saw him just now go into the *podratchik's* house."

"Was that Herz?" Struganoff exclaimed. "I could not imagine who it could be that went in."

"He will have gone to tell them of the *podratchik's* death, I expect," said Kotke. "There is plenty for both of us to do in that house—if we could only get in."

"I must lay hold of the wench somehow," Struganoff muttered. "But if I go back to the gang and bring them round, she may escape. Praise be to the Holy Mother, there are no back doors to the house! They can only leave by the front or by the yard gate."

"And they must come this way if they do," Kotke added. "They would hardly try to force their way down the street."

"Well," said Struganoff, "I suppose there is nothing for it but to wait. Those dogs are mad keen to break into the house. I told them there are thousands of roubles in the office, and a whole cellar full of *vodka*. They will come on right enough as soon as the children get tired and go to bed."

Ivanka stirred restlessly.

"Roubles and *vodka*—roubles and *vodka*," he murmured. "And I am so drunk that I can't help myself to either!"

Struganoff's boot came in violent contact with the pit of Ivanka's stomach. The unfortunate *moujik* rolled over on to his side retching horribly. For some minutes he lay on the ground spewing up the contents of his overburdened stomach, whilst Struganoff rained kicks and smothered curses upon him. When the spasm was over he lay for a while quite still; the effect of the evacuation was sobering, and his wits were slowly returning. Presently, he rose from the ground, and leaned against the wall of the passage.

"Holy Mother—but I have an ungrateful belly!" he groaned. "All the good *vodka* wasted!"

"There is plenty more across the street," said Kotke, laying a restraining hand on Struganoff. "Go back to your comrades and tell them that they have only to whip the children and they can get as much *vodka* as would float a ship."

"And roubles!" added Struganoff, entering into the idea but not the simile. "Back you go, Ivanka, and bring them on!"

Ivanka advanced unsteadily to the mouth of the passage. The fresh air revived him, and there was no longer any need for the supporting hand against the wall. He stepped out into the street and paused.

"How am I to get to them, Excellency?" he asked.

"Come with me," said Kotke, laying hold of Ivanka's arm, and leading him by the way which he himself had taken. "Down that street; the first turning to the right, and then the second to the right. And don't lose time about it!"

Ivanka saluted, and, pulling himself together,

marched off, as he had been taught to march in the army of Alexander II., and Kotke returned to Struganoff in the passage.

"He'll do, I think," he said laconically.

"He's the only one who has done anything to-night," Struganoff answered. "He has done for 'Nash Jacov'—there is that in his favour."

They stood together at the entrance of the passage, looking towards the house of Serkovski and the street beyond, and listening. The fight at the lower end of the street had died down; the *moujiks* fearing to attack the boys of the "Ecce Signum," and the students being content to hold them in check. The whole affair might have fizzled out, but for the arrival of Ivanka upon the scene. He came with a tale of unlimited vodka and roubles in the house of the *podratchik*, and roused his companions to a new enthusiasm. Of his own unaided genius he added to their zeal by declaring that Tochka was known to be in the house, awaiting crucifixion, and that the Chief Rabbi was there making the necessary arrangements.

Then he sang to them, and Struganoff and Kotke could distinctly hear the burden of the song as it was taken up by the *moujiks* in chorus:

"What is like the vodka?
Hey, what? what?
What is like the vodka O?
I have marched for many a verst,
But for quenching of the thirst
There is nothing like the vodka O."

Then with frantic yells, the conflict was renewed;

and the boys were driven back towards the house. The guard drawn up across the entrance rushed to reinforce them. Yuri Belaieff, who had adopted his old disguise of a *sachar morojhnik* in order that he might not be recognised and bring trouble to his father, remained by the gate alone. He would gladly have led the "Ecce Signum" against the *moujiks*, but his fears for the personal safety of Miriam Serkovski kept him at her door.

The students were divided into two companies, one of which had scattered the mob at the entrance of the Synagogue. The other, consisting of about a hundred lads, was told off for the defence of Jacov Serkovski's house. As Yuri listened to the conflict in the street below, and gathered from the shouts which reached him that the boys were giving way before their assailants, he blamed himself for allowing the larger company to go to the rescue of the Jews in the Synagogue. They were to have returned to Serkovski's house after making a tour of the Jewish quarter, and Yuri awaited them with impatience; until it was brought home to him, by the gradual approach of the struggle, that it was unsafe to wait longer. Whatever might be the eventual outcome of the fight, Miriam's position was dangerous so long as it continued. Yuri felt that no time was to be lost in getting her out of the house. He went to the door and knocked. The precious moments sped, the uproar in the street drew nearer; but no one opened the door to him. He knocked again, and waited, gazing anxiously at the light in the window above. A shadow fell across the blind, and someone drew the corner of it aside and peered out.

"Open the door! For God's sake don't delay!" he shouted up. The window opened.

"What is it? Who are you?"

"It is I, Rabbi, who admitted you to the house," said Yuri. "It is not safe to stay here. Open the door and I will explain."

The blind fell back across the open window, and a moment later Yuri heard steps on the stairs. Then the door opened, and he went inside.

Struganoff and Kotke had emerged from the passage and stood opposite Serkovski's house watching.

"Who is it?" Struganoff asked, as Yuri entered the house.

"I wish I could tell you," said Kotke. "He looks like a *sachar morojhnik*. But what the devil should one of them have to do with the Jews?"

Struganoff could find no reasonable explanation and kept silence, and Kotke continued:

"There will be developments now, Basil. It will be curious if they don't make a bolt for it. Are you ready?"

As he put the question, Kotke drew a long butcher's knife from its sheath beneath his coat.

"It's an heirloom," he explained. "The only thing the old man left behind him when he died. I always carry it."

Struganoff had discarded his sword when he placed himself in command of the gang of *moujiks;* but his hand went into the pocket of his great coat and grasped the stock of a pistol.

"Mine's a peaceful mission," he said. "I don't suppose there will be much difficulty in persuading

the young woman to come with me—if she's let alone."

At that moment the door of the house opened, and several terrified servants rushed out towards the street. Struganoff and Kotke drew close to the entrance, standing one on each side of it, so that they could see clearly those who passed out. The half-dozen servants scurried through the gate like frightened rats, and turning their backs on the clamour of the fight, which was now almost at the doors, ran with all speed for safety. Then, after a brief interval, Daniel Herz, with Miriam holding his arm, came out, followed by Yuri and Fräulein Erard.

As they passed the gate, Kotke sprang forward and drove his knife into the Rabbi's back, and Struganoff seizing Miriam by the arm, dragged her out into the street.

"Run! Run!" Yuri cried to Fräulein Erard, pushing her past the body of Daniel Herz which had fallen across the path. Kotke, after delivering his blow, had disappeared in the direction of the combatants; and as the little German woman hurried breathlessly after the servants, Yuri turned upon Struganoff in the roadway. The quartermaster fired and missed, and Yuri closed, throwing him heavily to the ground. Struganoff's head struck the curbstone and fractured.

In the struggle Miriam had fallen, and, overcome by exhaustion and terror, she lay on the road, too weak to rise. Yuri, disengaging himself from his dying adversary, rose and went to her.

"Can you walk?" he demanded abruptly, raising her in his arms. He had hitherto avoided speaking

to her or showing himself in the light; for he did not wish her to know him. He had intended to render her this last service, and then to go out of her life for ever, except as a memory. But his voice betrayed him.

"Yuri!" she murmured.

"Hush!—we must go to Anna Paskevitch. She will take care of you, and you will be safe in the house of a priest."

"My father!" she cried bitterly. "Tell me, Yuri, that it is not true. They cannot have killed 'Nash Jacov'!"

It was the first that Yuri had heard of Jacov Serkovski's murder; but there was no time for explanations.

"No! no!" he said. "Please God they have not harmed him! But I know nothing. We must make haste."

She leaned heavily upon his shoulder as they started. Behind them the fight raged with varying chances. In front a police patrol approached with unhurried tread. And close by them, in the shadow of the houses, Kotke Trubman followed noiselessly.

The patrol had been sent out purely as a matter of form. It was not expected of it that it would suppress the riot; but on these unfortunate occasions it is necessary for the police authorities to take some steps. So when the report of the outbreak had been brought to the Politzmaister, he had ordered that a patrol of six men should be sent out—*to investigate.* They came leisurely down the street, towards the scene of the disturbance, without any intention of being dragged into a quarrel which in

no way concerned them. As soon as Kotke heard the measured "clop—clop" of their feet, he sheathed his father's knife, and wiping his hands on the skirts of his coat, hurried forward to meet them.

"There has been murder here!" he cried excitedly to the police officer in command. "An officer of the army has been killed. I saw it done. The murderer, a *morojhnik*, is just behind me. It was over a woman."

The officer ordered the patrol to halt, and came forward leisurely.

"What is the matter?" he demanded.

As he put the question, Yuri, supporting Miriam with his arm, came abreast of the patrol.

"That's the man!" Kotke exclaimed, pointing to the figures which had emerged out of the darkness. "He has murdered an officer of the 21st Regiment."

"Fetch him here!"

Two men of the patrol left the ranks and ran after Yuri and Miriam, calling to them to stop. It was a hopeless task to endeavour to escape; and, for himself, Yuri cared not whether he were arrested or no. For Miriam, there would be, at least, temporary safety in arrest; she would be saved from the violence of the mob which was besetting her house; but of her ultimate fate he dared not think. Yuri knew nothing of Zolotnikoff's intentions regarding her, nor did he connect the attempted abduction by Struganoff with the bishop. But he knew only too well, that, as a female prisoner awaiting trial, she would be subjected to indignity and insult at the hands of the prison authorities. But there was no help for it. The two *gorodovois* closed in upon them,

and one laid hold of Yuri by the arm. Miriam was hardly conscious of what was taking place. Physical exhaustion and anxiety had deprived her of the power of thought. So long as Yuri supported her she cared not whither he led her. She surrendered herself unreservedly, and found peaceful contentment in the resignation of her will to his.

"We will come," said Yuri. "There is no need for force. The lady is very weak; she cannot walk without assistance."

The *gorodovois*, satisfied that their prisoners would make no attempt to escape, marched beside them to the officer, who was listening to Kotke's story.

"We must proceed to the scene of the murder," said the officer, as they came up. "Bring the prisoners along. Quick march!"

As they neared the house of Serkovski it became evident to Yuri that the reinforcement which he had so anxiously awaited had arrived, and had driven the *moujiks* down the street, from the far end of which the sounds of fighting could still be heard. In front of the house all was quiet, and the street there was empty, except for the bodies of Daniel Herz and Struganoff lying close together by the gate.

"Here is the body of the officer," said Kotke, pointing to the dark figure at the edge of the road.

The commander of the patrol gave the order to halt, and went forward with Kotke to the spot where Struganoff lay. Stooping over him, he satisfied himself that he was dead. Then he caught sight of the other corpse on the pathway.

"What is that?" he asked.

"He is only a Jew, who was killed in the rioting," Kotke answered with indifference.

The police officer turned the body over with his foot.

"Holy Mother!" he exclaimed. "It is the Chief Rabbi!"

"Indeed!" said Kotke, with a languid display of interest. "He brought it upon himself by stirring up his pestilent people to acts of oppression and violence. He is better dead."

The officer did not consider that the murder of a Jew concerned him professionally; but the murder of an officer of the army was quite another matter. Going back to the patrol, he summoned Yuri. He came, with Miriam still clinging to him, and stood before the officer.

"Do you know anything of this affair?"

"The dead man is Quartermaster Struganoff of the 21st Regiment," said Yuri simply. "He, with Gospodin Trubman, who is standing beside you, made an attack on Chief Rabbi Daniel Herz and this lady. Gospodin Trubman murdered the Rabbi——"

"That is a lie!" Kotke exclaimed, thoroughly taken aback by the knowledge of his identity which the *sachar morojhnik* displayed. He had long since forgotten the episode of their former meeting.

"The question is—who killed Quartermaster Struganoff?" the officer interposed.

"Struganoff offered violence to this lady," Yuri continued, "and I went to her assistance. Struganoff fired at me, and in the struggle which followed, I threw him to the ground, and his head struck the curbstone."

"Then you say that you killed him?" the officer demanded.

"Yes, I killed him."

"You hear that!" said the commander, turning for corroboration to his men. "You all heard his confession?"

A low murmur of assent ran along the ranks of the patrol.

"And who is the woman?" he asked, addressing the question to Yuri.

Yuri was silent, but Kotke quickly interposed.

"She had nothing to do with the murder. I can testify to her innocence."

"But we must have her name. She will be an important witness."

Kotke plucked at the officer's sleeve, and drawing him aside, whispered:

"A little discretion in her case is advisable. She is a servant in the household of His Holiness the Bishop. It would be advantageous not to bring her into this affair."

"But her evidence——"

"There is no need of her evidence. The man has confessed, and I can speak to the fact that he murdered Struganoff. You will find that it is worth your while to leave her out of it. A hundred roubles would not pay for the mischief of dragging her in."

"A hundred roubles!" said the officer thoughtfully. "But what are we to do with her?"

"I will take her back to the palace," said Kotke; "and come down to the Police Office afterwards."

Yuri watched the whispered conference between Kotke and the officer with apprehension. He could

not understand why Kotke should be anxious to screen Miriam and keep her name out of the affair. The fact that she was a Jewess made it the more unintelligible. He had refrained from giving her name, when asked, principally for the reason that a confession of her nationality would expose her to immediate danger of insult. He preferred that the disclosure of her identity should be made at the Police Office, whither, he was certain, they would all be taken. His own identity, too, would have to be made known there; and Yuri wondered vaguely how the news of the arrest of the son of the Politzmaister, on a charge of murder, would be received in his father's office. It did not cause him any concern; for he was careless of his fate. Nothing seemed to matter much, except Miriam. There was nothing left for him to live for. His career had been a failure, his father, whom he had loved devotedly and respected had grievously disappointed him; his love had been given hopelessly to the girl who now stood at his side for the last time; the faith which had been his in the goodness and mercy of God was shattered by the Church which should have fostered it. And now his honour was to follow the rest—torn from him by the lying tongue of Kotke Trubman. No, nothing mattered now except Miriam!

The officer turned from Kotke, and called his men to "attention." He gave orders for the removal of Struganoff's body to the mortuary, and then, turning to Yuri:

"You will come to the Police Office," he said. "The file on the right, escort the prisoner. The woman is not wanted. Leave her here."

"She is not fit to be left alone," Yuri objected. "She must come with us."

"Silence, you dog! and let the woman go."

But Yuri still held to Miriam in fierce defiance of authority. And Miriam, realising the meaning of the order, clung to him crying piteously.

"Take her away!" the officer shouted. "Take her away from him!"

The escort seized Yuri by the arms and dragged Miriam from him.

"I shall report this to the Politzmaister," Yuri exclaimed hotly. "It may interest you to know that I am Yuri Belaieff, his son."

Kotke burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's good!" he shouted. "A *sachar morojhnik* is never at a loss! Well, Your Excellency," addressing himself to Yuri, "it may relieve your mind to know that I shall personally look after the young lady. You need have no anxiety on her account!"

The officer gave the order to march, and the patrol, with Yuri between the ranks, moved off towards the Police Office.

Miriam lay on the ground unconscious, and Kotke Trubman stood over her.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### KOTKE.

WHEN the students of the "Ecce Signum" charged and scattered the mob in front of the Synagogue, Father Nikon took refuge down a side street, and, running as fast as his long cassock and inebriated condition would allow, was soon out of danger of pursuit. Exhausted by his flight, he staggered to the porch of a church and sank down upon the steps to recover. He rested his burning head on his hands and closed his eyes, so that he might not see the whirling procession of houses and street-lamps which gyrated fantastically in whichever direction he turned. The yells of the *moujiks* vibrated in his tortured brain; but above the clamour a still, small voice whispered of catastrophe and remorse. The chaos of his mind was peopled with drifting phantoms of men implacable and things dire and undefined, and struggling with the forces of calamity was one small creature of anguish which could not be suppressed.

"Jacov Serkovski is dead! Jacov Serkovski is dead!" he muttered, repeating the phrase over and over again in drunken reiteration.

Presently he rose from the steps of the church and, with an effort, continued on his way in the gathering darkness. He would go home and tell Anna all about it. She would be sure to know what was the best thing to be done. He hoped she would not be very angry about Serkovski's death; but it was no fault of his. The Jews should not steal poor children for their feasts, and cheat the *moujiks* out of their daily bread. It was all their own fault. But Jacov Serkovski was dead—he had seen him killed like an ox by the man Ivanka. Pfui! it was horrible! Then he began to realise what Jacov Serkovski's death meant to him. He would be turned out of the little green house with its tangled garden, and there was nobody who would give him another. Miriam Serkovski would no longer come to visit them, bringing presents of tea and sugar, and clothes for the children. At the thought of all the loss that Jacov Serkovski's death entailed upon him, the priest wrung his hands and wept, complaining to the Holy Mother and the Saints that he had not merited such punishment.

At the door of his house he paused in order to marshal his scattered senses to meet Anna. Then he lifted the latch and entered. In the kitchen Anna was seated at the table sewing; but at the sound of her husband's footstep on the path, she threw her work on one side and went to meet him with dread impatience. Ever since the arrival of the *moujiks* at the old saw-mill Anna had been in a state of nervous terror. Like Yuri, she had vainly tried to persuade her darling Miriam to quit the town. She knew that the hour had come for the Jews of Jelgava, unless Yuri Belaieff had forestalled the crisis which

threatened them. But the young baron was at Dorpat, and therefore it was impossible for him to do more than warn his father, the Politzmaister. Anna had no great faith in the authorities, she would rather that the young baron had been in Jelgava in person to protect Miriam and the house of Serkovski. From her own stupid husband she had been able to extract but little information. He went daily to the saw-mill, and returned in the evening; but he never had anything to tell her. To-day he was much later than usual, and Anna's anxiety increased as the hours went by.

Father Nikon came in blinking stupidly in the bright light of the kitchen after the darkness of the street. Anna glanced at him, and knew in a moment that he was drunk; but her anxiety overcame her disgust, and she began at once to question him.

"What has happened, Nikon?"

The priest steadied himself with his hands on the table.

"Jacov Serkovski is dead," he blurted out.

"And Miriam?"

"I know nothing about Miriam. Ivanka killed 'Nash Jacov.' I saw him do it."

"Where is Miriam?" Anna demanded. The shock of the news brought consternation to her; but Anna was a brave woman, and she would go through with the ordeal of learning the whole truth without a sign.

"I know nothing about Miriam," the pope repeated. "Ivanka killed Jacov Serkovski at the Synagogue."

"What were you doing at the Synagogue?"

"The Jews stole a boy from the camp, and the *moujiks* went to get him back."

By question and answer Anna extracted the whole story, so far as Father Nikon knew it, though the priest was careful not to disclose the leading part that he himself had played in the tragedy. Every now and again he would bewail the loss which Serkovski's death would mean to them. And Anna listened to him patiently, because she wanted Nikon to speak without reserve. She was still questioning him, when there was a knock at the door. Father Nikon started, and the beads of sweat broke out on his forehead; and Anna, with eager expectancy in her eyes, rushed past him to the door, exclaiming:

"That will be Miriam!"

Fräulein Erard entered breathlessly.

"Where is Miriam?" Anna cried, peering into the darkness of the street.

The little German leant against the wall of the passage to recover breath.

"She will be here directly, please God," she gasped.

Leaving the door ajar, Anna brought Fräulein Erard into the kitchen and made her sit down. It was some minutes before she had sufficiently recovered to be able to give an explanation of her presence in the priest's house; and Anna, who was listening intently for Miriam's step, did not press her to begin.

"Why does she not come?" she asked at length impatiently.

The anxiety in the wide blue eyes of the German woman deepened.

"I do not know. Perhaps something has happened."

Very rapidly Fräulein Erard told her story, ending

with the murder of Daniel Herz and the seizure of Miriam.

"The man who came to warn us went to her assistance. A shot was fired, but I do not know by whom. Perhaps he was wounded—I could not see—but I stopped to listen. I heard his voice again, and I thought that they were following me," she concluded.

Father Nikon, who was seated by the table, had fallen forward, with his head resting upon his arms, in a drunken slumber. Anna was standing by him, listening with parted lips to the Fräulein's story.

"You do not know what has become of her?" she exclaimed. "You left her with this *morojhnik* in the streets of Jelgava!"

"I could do nothing," Fräulein Erard answered, with a helpless gesture of the hands. "I thought she was following me here with the man."

Anna seized her husband by the shoulder and shook him violently.

"Wake up, Nikon!" she cried.

The drunken priest started from his sleep excitedly.

"What is the matter?"

"You must come with me and find Miriam Serkovski."

"But the streets are full of rioters," Fräulein Erard suggested meekly.

"That is why I want him with me," Anna retorted. "They will not harm a priest—the superstitious fools!"

Father Nikon rose sulkily, and prepared to accompany his wife.

"I will come too," said Fräulien Erard. She was nettled by Anna's contempt, which was undeserved;

for she had done all that could reasonably be expected of a woman.

"No! you must stay here," said Anna. "The children must not be left alone in the house."

As she was speaking, she adjusted a shawl about her head and pinned it securely.

"Come, Nikon!" she exclaimed, laying a hand on her husband's arm. "Come and find Miriam."

* * * * * *

Kotke Trubman, stooping down, took Miriam by the arm and exhorted her to rise.

"It is foolish to lie about in the streets like this," he expostulated, "and it does you no good. You had better get up and come with me."

But Miriam was not conscious of his presence. Exhaustion, bodily and mental, supervened, mercifully depriving her of her senses; and Kotke was driven to recognise the fact of her helplessness. It was a development on which he had not counted. He had intended to persuade her that the only hope of safety lay in entrusting herself to him; and with a plausible tale, to conduct her willingly to the bishop's palace; or, if that failed, to resort to threats of violence to compel her. But neither fair words nor menaces were of any avail in the case, since Miriam was not in a condition to hear them.

Standing over the helpless girl, Kotke brought his intelligence to bear upon the situation. In a short time he would be expected at the office of the Politzmaister, to give evidence of the murder of Struganoff. Meanwhile there was the woman to be disposed of. He knew well enough the instructions which

Struganoff had received concerning her, and his chief object was to execute Struganoff's commission and secure his reward. Often, in his chequered career, he had been called upon to give his services for a similar undertaking, and he had always found it a profitable commission. It was worth while to go to some pains to bring the affair to a satisfactory conclusion for his patron, the bishop. But it was evident that it was not to be easily accomplished. The street was now empty and silent, and there was no one whom he could send for a *droshki* to convey the hapless girl to her destination. He waited for a time, in the hope that someone would pass whom he could summon to his assistance. But no one came, and, at last, he realised that he must himself fetch a *droshki*.

Kotke was not a strong man; but, for all that, he stooped down, and taking Miriam under the arms, dragged her to the entrance of the house, and left her within the gate. Then he hurried off towards the market-place where he knew that he would find a *droshki*.

Nearly half-an-hour passed before he returned in the conveyance, which drew up at the house in Marien Street. He jumped out, and went to the spot where he had left Miriam—but she was not there. He searched the narrow strip of garden, which separated the house from the street, rapidly and without success. Then he went to the door and tried the handle. The door opened, and Kotke groped his way into the dark passage. Lighting a small oil lamp which he found in the hall, he began to explore the rooms. They were all empty and silent. Miriam was not there; but Kotke remembered that Jacov Serkovski was a

rich man. It would be worth his while to look into some of the drawers and cupboards. The door leading to the large office on the ground floor was locked, and Kotke knew enough of the habits of the Jews to realise that it would be useless to break into it—it was very certain that no money would be left outside the iron safes, which he had no means of forcing. But in the dwelling rooms he picked up several little articles of value, and in one drawer a few paper roubles and some small change He was disappointed with the results of his investigations; but, at least, they would pay for the *droshki* and leave something over to make up for the disappearance of Miriam. Going out quietly into the garden again, he carefully examined the gravel round the gate by the light of the oil lamp. There was a long streak where he had dragged the girl through the gate; there were the marks of many footprints round the entrance, made by the servants who had fled, and the guard of students which had been stationed there; and at the spot where he had left the unconscious girl there was an impression on the grass, and by it a crucifix, which once had been round the neck of Father Nikon. Kotke picked it up, and examined it by the light of the lamp. He knew that the daughter of Jacov Serkovski, the Jew, would not be wearing the sacred symbol of Christianity. Someone had been before him, and carried her away. It was just such a cross as the popes of the Orthodox Church wore round their necks. Was it possible that the drunken Batushka had forestalled him? He slipped the crucifix into his pocket with the rest of the booty which he had secured in the house, and going back to

the *isvostchik*, who waited for him near the gate, ordered him to drive to the Police Office.

It was past ten o'clock when Kotke arrived at the Police Office; but in spite of the late hour, there was considerable excitement and bustle within, to which his arrival contributed not a little. He was offered a seat in the waiting-room, whilst an officer went to give notice that the witness, Gospodin Trubman, was present. In the waiting-room there were several police officers, among them the commander of the patrol who had arrested the prisoner. He came over to Kotke and bent down, so that what he had to say should be audible to him only.

"There is the devil to pay!" he whispered. "The fellow is really the Politzmaister's son, and the old man has come down himself to investigate the charge. He is in a fury, but whether it is with me or with his son, I can't be sure."

Kotke whistled softly.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"The Politzmaister insists on hearing the whole case. I gave him my evidence; but I said nothing about the woman. You need not mention her."

"I made a mistake about the woman," said Kotke casually. He was resolved not to pay the hundred roubles, which he had virtually promised to the officer to be silent on the subject, since Miriam had escaped him after all. "After you had gone, I found that she was only a common prostitute, and not the woman I thought her to be. But if you said nothing about her, there is no need for me to mention her either."

The door opened, and a voice cried:

"Gospodin Trubman!"

Kotke rose from his chair and, nodding reassuringly to the officer, went out into the passage.

Baron von Belaieff was alone in his office when Kotke entered accompanied by a police official.

"Bring in the prisoner," he commanded abruptly. Yuri Belaieff was marched in by another door, and stood under escort at the far end of the room. His father did not look at him; but turning to Kotke:

"You have seen this man before?" he asked.

"Yes, Excellency," said Kotke. "I saw him to-night in Marien Street."

"Under what circumstances?"

"There was a disturbance in the Jewish quarter of the town. Some of the men who have lately come from Vitebsk were attacked by the Jews. I went to see what was happening, and I was going down Marien Street, when I saw the officer who is in charge of the *moujiks* at the camp trying to restore order. A Jew had been knocked down in the street and wounded, and the officer was endeavouring to protect him from the mob."

"Did you know the officer personally?"

"Yes, Excellency. He was Quartermaster Struganoff of the 21st Regiment. I have known him for some time."

"What happened?" said the Politzmaister.

"The mob drew off when Struganoff ordered them, and went down the street, all but one man, who appeared to be a *morojhnik*."

"Are you able to identify the man?"

"He is the prisoner there," said Kotke, pointing to Yuri. The Politzmaister did not raise his eyes from the paper in front of him, but said abruptly:

"Go on."

"He made a savage attack on Quartermaster Struganoff and threw him to the ground. When he was down he struck him on the back of the head with a stone. I went to Struganoff's assistance, and the prisoner made off. I found that Struganoff was dead, and then I followed the prisoner, and gave him in charge of the patrol, which was fortunately just coming down the street."

Kotke stopped abruptly.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"Has the prisoner any questions to ask the witness?"

"If you believe his evidence, I have nothing to ask," said Yuri quietly. During Kotke's recital he had been dreading the moment when Miriam Serkovski's name would be brought into the story. He asked himself why it was that neither the police officer nor Kotke had mentioned her. He was thankful that they had not; but there was something behind their reticence which he could not understand, and which indicated collusion between the two men for some unknown reason. If he cross-examined Kotke he must bring her name into the affair, and rather than do so, he remained silent. What had become of her? What had this vile creature done with her? These were the questions which disturbed his mind; and not any considerations of how he was to clear himself of the charge of murder. His father knew the character of Kotke Trubman as well as he did—for Kotke was notorious. If he chose to believe Kotke's story after the warning which he himself had given

him, as to the part Trubman was to play in the outbreak, there was nothing more to be said.

There was a pause, whilst the old baron fumbled nervously with the report on the table before him.

"Surely," he said at last, "surely there must be some extenuating circumstances which you wish to bring forward? You have confessed to killing Quartermaster Struganoff, and the evidence of Gospodin Trubman leaves no doubt on that point; but there must be some explanation which you wish to give of the affair?"

In the heart of Yuri was exceeding bitterness against his father. The contempt which he felt for him when he succumbed to the Governor and the Holy Synod was intensified by his irresolution now. The fact that his father was trying to find a means of escape for him, instead of mollifying, only exasperated him. It was his duty, as Politzmaister, to commit him for trial on his own confession and the evidence of Kotke, if he believed it. Then let him commit him, and have done with it! He would make no excuses, and appeal for no mercy. Out of the lying lips of Kotke Trubman he would be condemned. What did it matter? Was injustice so rare that he should complain when the scourge fell upon his back? All humanity groaned beneath it—then why should he escape?

"I have nothing to say," he answered defiantly.

The Politzmaister raised his eyes, and looked at his son for the first time since he had been brought back into the room; then, with a shrug of the shoulders, he signalled to the escort to march the prisoner out.

Left alone in his office, the Politzmaister leaned

forward with his head in his hands and sobbed aloud. He loved his son Yuri; and, in spite of the rift which had lately divided them, he had looked forward to the day when they would be reunited. But stronger even than the love which he had for his son was the pride of race which had belonged to the von Belaieffs for generations. And now his son, by his confession of murder, and by his inability to give any explanation of his act, would drag the old noble name in the dust. A von Belaieff found guilty and condemned for a vulgar murder! It was inconceivable! That his own neglect in refusing to recognise the danger to the peace which his son had pointed out to him; that his own cowardice in bowing the knee to the corrupt orders of the Holy Synod; that his own self-seeking indulgence in sinking his conscience for the sake of retaining his appointment; that these things were dishonourable and degrading to the name of von Belaieff had not entered his head—he had been far too long an official of the Russian Government. Public disgrace threatened the ancient name, and his own son had brought it upon the house of Belaieff. That was the sentiment which was in his mind as he quitted the office and returned to his home. His son Yuri was unworthy.

Kotke Trubman was mightily relieved when the ordeal was over, and he was at liberty to return to his home. It had been a tiring day for him, and it was with satisfaction that he saw once more the lights of the *traktir* over which he lived. It was a low restaurant in a shady part of the town. In the *traktir* mine host dispensed villainous vodka and cheap Russian champagne to a noisy crew of libertines

and prostitutes. In an adjoining room on the ground floor was a billiard room, where Kotke often played for roubles in his spare time. On the storey above were four rooms which were let to lodgers. One was occupied by a lady of the ancient profession, who drove a lively trade with the customers. The second belonged to a drunken man of letters, a contributor in prose and verse to *Stephenhagen's Gazette*, whose effusions were under the frequent disapproval of the censor. The landlord himself, with his wife and two children, occupied the third. And the fourth for many years had been the home of Kotke Trubman.

It was essential, in a household of this description, that no questions should be asked. The lodgers came and went, and brought their friends, as seemed good to them, and no one commented on their doings. When Kotke returned home at midnight the *traktir* was empty, except for the landlord and his two lodgers, who were taking a final glass before retiring for the night. As he pushed open the door and entered he was greeted with a chorus of welcome. The poet, who was half drunk, steadied himself with his left arm round the neck of Dasha, the prostitute, whilst he brandished in his right hand his empty glass, shouting a quatrain of a Russian drinking song.

"Oï, Kotke!" Dasha screamed, struggling to free herself from the poet's embrace. "Take away this drunken beast before he strangles me!"

The landlord came forward with a glass of vodka for Kotke, and Dasha and the poet were left to settle their differences without interruption.

"I'm famished," said Kotke. "Have you got anything to eat?"

The landlord disappeared behind a screen which shut off part of the room, and came back with a plate of salted herrings and a loaf of bread, which he placed on the table before Kotke. Dasha and the poet, having arranged a truce, came and seated themselves at the table and watched Kotke eating his supper. The red smear on the back of his right wrist did not escape the sharp eyes of Dasha; but discretion and the tacit rule of the house forbade awkward questions. But there was one subject on which the collective curiosity of the household could no longer maintain silence. For the last four-and-twenty hours unearthly sounds had, from time to time, proceeded from behind the locked door of Kotke's room. The landlord's wife and children had been almost frightened to death by them, and the other members of the household had kept their distance. Dasha had been seen by the poet crossing herself when the hideous sounds rang through the wooden house; he laughed at her, but, for all that, he did not like it himself. And now, as they all sat round the table looking at Kotke eating his supper, silence fell upon them. The landlord looked across at the poet meaningly; and the poet nudged Dasha. None of them wished to put the question which they all wanted answered. But at last Dasha plucked up courage.

"What sort of a wild beast is it that you have got in your room, Kotke?" she asked.

Kotke looked up at her inquiringly, and then, with an oath, exclaimed:

"I had forgotten all about him! Wait a minute!"

He got up hastily and made his way to the rickety wooden staircase. They heard him stumble up in the

darkness, and unlock the door of his room; and then the ghastly cry again:

"Oiya, oiya, oiya! Ha! ha! ha!"

The landlord's wife in the adjoining room screamed, and Kotke's voice was heard.

"Stop that noise, and come with me!"

Then Kotke came down again with the idiot Tochka at his heels.

"He is quite harmless," he explained, pushing the poor *moujik* forward into the light of the lamp. "I rescued him from the cursed Jews who were going to kill him. But the Jews have had a lesson to-night, and there is no fear of them harming him now, so he can go out again."

He led Tochka towards the street entrance, and was going to turn him out when Dasha interfered.

"It is a shame to turn him out at this time of night!" she exclaimed.

The poet laughed aloud and rapped upon the table with his knuckles:

"Let him stay, Kotke. Dasha will give him a share of her bed!"

"No! no!" Dasha cried, shrinking away from him.

"We both sleep single," said Kotke; "so if you won't have him, out he must go!"

Tochka's hungry eyes were riveted in a stupid stare at the remains of Kotke's supper. Dasha, summoning up her courage, took the loaf of white bread from the table and thrust it into Tochka's hands. He began to devour it eagerly; and Kotke pushed him out into the street and shut the door on him.

"You are a beast, Kotke!" Dasha cried vehemently. Then she burst into tears.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### FATHER NIKON'S CRUCIFIX.

TWO days passed, and the massacre of the Atonement ceased to be the chief subject of conversation in Jelgava, outside the Jewish quarter and the walls of the Gymnasium. There had been riots against the Jews in more than a hundred towns and villages in the South Western Provinces of Russia during the year. Many of them had been on a far more extensive scale than the outbreak in Jelgava, where the death roll was restricted to half-a-dozen Jews, including a woman and two children, and the peaceful Lettish and German inhabitants congratulated themselves and the Jews that the affair had been no worse. The death of Gospodin Serkovski and of the Chief Rabbi were deplored; but it was unnecessary to lament for more than a day for those whose names only are familiar; and therefore the people of Jelgava consigned the tragedy to history, and betook themselves to their various affairs without more ado.

But amongst the Jews there was lamentation and exceeding bitterness of soul. The Presidents of the

Synagogue summoned the members to conferences, which were perpetually interrupted by wailing cries of the congregation for those who were dead and for those who were dishonoured. There were many poor Jews who lamented that death had not come to their dear ones rather than the dishonour which had made them outcasts. For the Law is inexorable—the woman who is defiled must be expelled from the community. There is no pity in the Law, and it recognises no extenuation. The hapless women who had fallen victims to the lust of the mob must be put away from among the congregation. The Rabbis who expounded the Law could find no escape for the unfortunates. The bonds of family love, the clasped hands of mercy, the consciousness of innocence must all give way before the awful sentence, "It is written." Love, mercy and purity and all the scraps of virtues which poor faltering humanity has gathered together from the wealth of Divine perfection are good; "but the observance of the Law outweighs all."

Their names were whispered from mouth to mouth with fearful and sorrowing breath. Guiltless, they were condemned; and stricken husbands and fathers shrank beneath their shame. Then amongst the elders in the chief seats of the Synagogue someone whispered the name "Miriam Serkovski." It was heard by the circle of elders around him, and a hush fell upon them. None knew what had become of her. Rumour, who feeds upon the corpses of reputations, spoke at last. She had fled from her father's house, it muttered, out into the streets of Jelgava, where the mob raged furiously. She had

not returned, and it was hinted that shame had driven her to take shelter in the house of a Christian priest. When the congregation had dispersed to their homes, the elders sought out the Rabbi, and the president laid the case of Miriam Serkovski before him.

Kotke Trubman stood before the bishop in the library of the palace. He had given His Holiness a full account of the outbreak and of the murder of Struganoff by the son of the Politzmaister on the morning following the occurrences. The story, as he had told it, corresponded exactly with the evidence which he had given at the police office, and there had been no mention of Miriam Serkovski, nor had the bishop asked any questions about her. He had dwelt at some length on the demise of Daniel Herz, and had given the bishop clearly to understand that the credit for ridding the world of the pestilent Jew was due to himself. But to-day he had sought an interview for the purpose of giving His Holiness certain information which he knew would be of interest to him.

Zolotnikoff was writing a full report of the affair to the Procurator when Kotke was announced. He laid aside his pen, and looked quickly at him with the penetrating glance which always made Kotke feel uncomfortable in his presence.

"Well?"

"There is a matter, Your Holiness, which I think it is my duty to mention," said Kotke uneasily. The bishop made no reply, and after a moment's hesitation he continued: "Quartermaster Struganoff told me that Your Holiness was desirous that no harm should

befall the women of Serkovski's house. So when he was killed I took upon myself the duty of trying to save them. All the servants fled from the house when they thought that the mob would break in; and last of all came the daughter of Serkovski and her governess. Young Baron Belaieff tried to carry off Miriam Serkovski, who fell over the body of the Rabbi on the pavement, and I went to her assistance. Just then the police patrol came up, and I gave the Baron in charge for the murder of Struganoff. They did not see the woman, or if they did they took no notice of her. When they had gone away I found that she had fainted, so I took her into the garden of the house, and went for a *droshki*, intending to bring her to Your Holiness for safety. I had to go a long way before I found one; and it was nearly half-an-hour before I returned. The woman had disappeared."

Kotke paused, and Zolotnikoff, who had listened to his story with the appearance of absolute indifference, picked up his pen and began to draw figures on the paper before him.

"You say that young Baron von Belaieff, who was disguised as a *morojhnik*, attempted to carry off the woman. Do you suppose that he had gone to the house for that purpose?"

"He was with some students of the Gymnasium who were struggling to enter the house. I have no doubt as to what their intentions were," Kotke answered significantly.

"Well, what happened afterwards?" said Zolotnikoff.

"I searched for her everywhere, but could not

find her. But on looking again at the spot where I had left her, I picked up this," said Kotke, producing Father Nikon's silver cross from his pocket and laying it on the table in front of the bishop.

Zolotnikoff looked at it casually.

"Do you know whose it is?"

"I believe that if Your Holiness were to ask Father Nikon he could tell you."

"You can leave it here," said Zolotnikoff. "I will see that it is returned to its owner."

"I trust that I have acted rightly?" said Kotke, rubbing his hands together nervously.

"Your intentions were doubtless good," the bishop answered. "It is the duty of all Christians to protect the weak and helpless."

Kotke bowed himself out of the room, and Zolotnikoff turned once more to the pages of his report. Sorting the sheets into order, he read it through rapidly, until he came to the part which Yuri Belaieff had taken in the proceedings.

"This will have to be amended," he said, detaching a couple of sheets from the rest. "Trubman's disclosures supply a motive for the young cub's behaviour. Attempted violence to a young girl—killed the officer who came to her rescue—headed the students of the Gymnasium in a riot——"

As he spoke the bishop jotted down notes of the indictment against Yuri Belaieff. It had been a puzzle to him to guess at the boy's motives; but Kotke's explanation was probably the true one; and the audacity of the youth in attempting to lay violent hands on Miriam Serkovski angered Zolotnikoff exceedingly. Ever since their meeting at the

Governor's palace he was convinced that Miriam would yield to him when the opportunity presented itself. He had waited with more patience than was usual with him in these affairs, relying on Struganoff to bring about the desired reunion in circumstances which would be entirely favourable. For Miriam would have been compelled to seek his protection from the mob. He would have extended it to her graciously, so that he would gain her gratitude. That was to have been the first step. Zolotnikoff was fully conscious of his power over women, he recalled, with gratified vanity, the impression which he had made upon her at the Governor's party, the friendly look in her eyes, and the quick pulses of the hand which he had held in his—the rest would have been easy. But his schemes had miscarried—and Yuri von Belaieff was the cause. And with that thought in his head he wrote again the two pages of his report. Then, when it was finished, his eyes fell upon the silver crucifix on the table. It was probably Father Nikon's—there was yet hope that all would be well.

The secretary entered the room just as the bishop sealed the envelope which contained his report.

"A woman has come to see Your Holiness," he announced, leaning confidentially over the table. "She refuses her name; but says that her business is urgent. She declines to go away until she has seen you."

"What is she like?" Zolotnikoff asked—and the secretary smiled.

"She is just a peasant woman, I think," he answered.

"Let her come in."

Anna Paskevitch entered, and crossed herself elaborately before the wanton icon. The door closed behind her, and she turned towards the bishop nervously fingering the fringe of the shawl which she wore over her head.

"You wish to see me, my daughter?" said Zolotnikoff suavely. What good fortune had sent Father Nikon's wife to him at this opportune moment he wondered?

Anna twisted her fingers together, hung her head, and laughed uneasily.

"Yes, Holiness," she stammered. "It is about Miriam Serkovski, the Jewess."

"What of her?"

"She is in our house, Holiness. The Jews won't take her back because—because——"

"Well?"

"It is a shameful thing for a woman to say, Holiness; and it is not true of Miriam. She is a good girl—and nothing has happened to her. But they will not take her back."

"Then she is still in your house?"

"Yes, Holiness, and she asked me to tell you."

"Do you mean that she sent you here?" Zolotnikoff exclaimed.

Anna laughed foolishly, with a meaning glance at the bishop, which did not escape his notice.

"Yes, Holiness. She wishes to see you, because you were kind to her once. But she would not come herself; she is afraid of her own people, and will not go out of the house."

"But what does she expect? That I—the Bishop of Courland—should go to see her?"

"Yes, Holiness," Anna answered, smirking at him. Would he never see the drift of her intentions? Must she make herself still more vile?

"Is it that she is anxious to become a member of our Church?" the bishop asked after a pause. Anna made an impatient gesture, and coming close to the table leaned over it and looked straight into the bishop's keen eyes.

"You need not fear me, Holiness," she whispered; "I know that you want Miriam. You should have come to me at first, instead of employing that clumsy quartermaster; I could have managed it for you long ago."

It was a very long time since anyone had been so frank with Zolotnikoff as this woman. The creatures whom he employed on the dirty work connected with his high calling or with his private affairs always veiled their true meaning under a specious piety, which attributed the loftiest motives to all his actions. But the wife of the priest was devoid of tact and *finesse*. She stated her case with a bluntness which shocked his sense of refinement. After all, she was only a peasant woman, and quite harmless. He would deal with her after her own manner.

"Why did you not come to me before?" he asked.

"I did not know until yesterday, Holiness."

"What did you not know?"

"About Quartermaster Struganoff—that he was to take Miriam to you."

"And who told you?"

Anna hesitated. She did not wish to bring

trouble on her husband, who had confessed that he had overheard Struganoff talking to Kotke Trubman at the saw-mill about the abduction of Miriam. Then she recollected that in future there would be no reason to fear the bishop's displeasure, and she answered truthfully:

"My husband, Nikon Paskevitch, told me."

Zolotnikoff looked up at her with the quick, penetrating glance which was the terror of his subordinates. But Anna met it without flinching, with an expression of vacant stolidity. The frown on the bishop's face gave way to a smile of contempt for the woman whose ignorance was so profound that she could not even lie to screen her husband. He made no comment on her confession, but passed on to matters of more immediate importance.

"This Jewish girl, you say, wishes me to go to her at your house. Is she willing to entrust herself to me entirely?"

"She would be a foolish girl to refuse," said Anna. "But Your Holiness must remember that she is very young, and you must be gentle with her. There will be no difficulty then."

The bishop glanced at the clock. Anna had already been with him for more than ten minutes. He did not wish her visit to attract undue attention, and therefore he must bring it to a speedy conclusion.

"Does Father Nikon know of your coming here?" he asked.

"Nobody knows, Holiness, I have not breathed a word to a living soul about it."

"Then he must be out when I come."

"Listen, Holiness," said Anna, who was as anxious for the termination of the interview as the bishop himself. "I have Miriam hidden in an old building in the garden, so that she may not be found by the Jews. There is a separate entrance to the garden from the back. I will meet you there to-morrow night at nine o'clock, and take you to her in the old powder house. Nobody will know anything about it. You can talk to her there for as long as you like."

"To-morrow night, at nine o'clock," Zolotnikoff repeated, picking up the crucifix of the priest which lay on the table beside him. "Do you know whose this is?"

Anna took it in her hand and examined it.

"It is my husband's!" she exclaimed in surprise, for she knew that Nikon had lost it when they were bringing Miriam back to their house on the night of the riot.

"It is by that crucifix that I know you are speaking the truth," said Zolotnikoff. "Give it back to me now, and I will bring it to-morrow. I shall not wear my robes, and I will give you the crucifix as a sign."

"Your Holiness will reward me for my services," said Anna with an effort, "when you leave the old house?"

The bishop opened a drawer of the table, and taking a small bundle of notes, held them out to her. But Anna shrank away from him.

"No! no!" she cried. "Not now. Your Holiness shall reward me when he leaves the powder house."

"As you like," said Zolotnikoff, putting the notes

back into the drawer, and wondering why she had refused them. When he looked up again she was gone.

Pulling the shawl across her face Anna fled through the passages of the palace to the side entrance. She rushed through the streets towards her home with wild eyes, heedless of the sober burgesses who stopped on their way to stare after her. She was breathless when she reached the little green house, and she paused on the threshold to listen. Within was silence, and she raised the latch and entered. No one was in the house, and Anna threw herself into a chair by the kitchen fire and tore the shawl from her head. Her cheeks were burning, and the wild expression was still in her eyes.

"It is done, and there is no going back now!" she gasped, resting her chin on her hands and staring blankly into the smouldering fire. "Why did I not do it before? Why did I wait until he had killed 'Nash Jacov'? Because I am a woman! a woman! a woman! But I will do it now—for her sake—for my darling Miriam. There is no safety for her whilst that devil is alive—and I swore to her mother on her death-bed to protect her child. And now she is cast out by her own people—the miserable fools! How dare they judge her! By their cursed religion she is condemned; and the head of the Christian Church receives her as his harlot! And they tell me there is a God!"

She rose and began to pace up and down the room.

"Oh! how am I to do it?" she cried. "It is

justice—nothing but justice! He will ruin my Miriam as ruthlessly as he had her father and the Rabbi murdered; and there is no one who can stop him—no one but Anna Paskevitch, the heretic wife of a priest! The little ones will be asleep in their bed, and Nikon I shall send off to the *traktir*. Miriam and the German woman will be safe at Bausk with the old General. And then, at nine o'clock, I must go to the gate, beneath the trees, and meet *him*."

She stopped before the kitchen dresser and opened the drawer. For some moments she peered into it; and then she thrust out a trembling hand and grasped a knife with a long, pointed blade. Glancing over her shoulder at the closed door she took it out; but it dropped from her hand and clattered on to the stone floor, and Anna threw herself on her knees by the table shuddering.

"I cannot do it!" she groaned. "I cannot do it!"

The sound of voices reached her from the garden, and through the open window she could see Fräulein Erard with Dossie in her arms coming from the old powder magazine. Behind them, Miriam, with bowed head, followed, holding little Vera by the hand. Her face was drawn, and in her eyes was the deep shadow of misery. Anna remained on her knees, staring fixedly at her. Suddenly she stooped down and gripped the knife on the floor convulsively. She rose to her feet, and with a harsh laugh muttered:

"What a wretched thing it is to be a woman!"

Then she threw the knife back into the drawer, and went to meet Miriam.

## CHAPTER XX.

### GENERAL BULVANOFF INTERVENES.

WHEN General Bulvanoff heard of the massacre of the Jews in Jelgava he was furious. He had no difficulty in determining on whom the responsibility for the outrage rested; and he cursed the bishop in vigorous Russian, a language which lends itself to forcible expletives. He received the news of the murder of his old friend Jacov Serkovski from Miriam herself, who had written him a heart-broken letter on the day after the riot, imploring him to come to the house of Nikon Paskevitch, the priest, to see her. She explained that, since her father and the Chief Rabbi were both dead, she regarded him and his wife as the best friends who remained to her to whom she could appeal for protection.

The old general lost no time in going to Jelgava and seeking out the house of Father Nikon; and he presented himself there on the morning of the third day after the massacre. Anna met him at the door, and showed him into the little sitting-room with the sanded floor and cheap suite of furniture.

"I am Anna Paskevitch, the wife of the pope," she

explained, pushing a chair towards the general, and motioning him to it.

The old man bowed and, unbuttoning his great-coat, sat down.

"I came here in answer to a letter from Miriam Serkovski," he said. "I understand that she is with you."

"Yes," Anna answered, "she is here, General, with her companion, the German woman. But I want to talk to you before you see her."

The general begged her to proceed, and Anna continued:

"Miriam told you in her letter about the murder of her father, and how she escaped from the house. My husband and I found her lying in the garden unconscious, and we brought her home. I was her nurse when she was a wee baby, and I love her like my own children."

"I have often heard Miriam speak of you," said the old general kindly. "You have proved your devotion by rescuing her from a terrible fate."

Anna interrupted him with a gesture of impatience.

"I did not mean to tell you about that," she said, "for you know it already. But there are things which you do not know—things which Miriam could not tell you. You did not know that the Bishop of Courland had hired men to bring Miriam to his palace, and that they would have succeeded if it had not been for the young Baron von Belaieff, God bless him—if there is a God!"

"Yuri von Belaieff?" the general exclaimed incredulously.

"It is all in the newspaper to-day about him," said

Anna. "He was disguised as a *sachar morojhnik*, and it was he who killed the villain Struganoff when he laid hands on Miriam. But there is nothing about Miriam in the newspaper—His Holiness would see to that."

"Yuri Belaieff," the old man repeated in an undertone. He was thinking of the week which Yuri and Miriam had spent in his house at Bausk, and of his wife's anxiety on their account.

"It is not safe for Miriam to remain in Jelgava whilst that devil of a bishop is at large," said Anna vehemently. "You must take her and her governess to Bausk."

"I shall certainly do so—if they will come," the general answered.

"You must take them away to-day," Anna continued. "It is not only the bishop whom she has to fear—her own people have turned against her. One of them came to the house yesterday and enquired if she were here. He was one of the elders of the Synagogue, Miriam said. He came in and saw Miriam alone. When he went away, she was crying bitterly, and all that I could get out of her was that they had turned her out of the Synagogue."

General Bulvanoff's eyes flashed indignantly.

"What do you mean? They have turned the daughter of Jacov Serkovski out of their confounded Synagogue. Why?"

"You must find that out for yourself, General; and you must see that they take her back, not that I care a rap for Synagogues and Churches and such foolishness; but it means more than that—it means that she is disgraced."

"By God, they shall take her back!" the general exclaimed, jumping up from his chair. At that moment he would cheerfully have massacred all the Jews in Jelgava. "The cowardly brutes! They would not have dared to utter a word against the 'Rose of Sharon' whilst 'Nash Jacov' was alive."

"Daniel Herz, the Chief Rabbi, or the young Baron Belaieff could have explained everything; but the Rabbi is dead, and Gospodin Yuri is in prison; so there is nobody who can speak for Miriam," said Anna bitterly.

"But Yuri Belaieff is the son of the Politzmaister," Bulvanoff exclaimed. "There should be no difficulty in getting him out of trouble; and the whole thing can be cleared up."

Anna laughed scornfully.

"You forget, General, that he has killed the servant of His Holiness the Bishop, Member of the Holy Synod; and that he has upset all His Holiness's plans."

"But his father has influence, and the Governor of State is his God-father. I shall go and see the Politzmaister at once."

As he spoke the old man buttoned up his coat, and settled the hilt of his sword into its place.

"Would you not like to see Miriam before you go?" Anna suggested.

"No, no! I'll not see her until I have done something for her. I shall be back again in an hour."

Anna, standing at the door of the house, watched the old soldier swaggering down the street, with his sword clanking at his heels.

"You're a very fine fellow," she mused; "but you

will not succeed in getting Gospodin Yuri out of prison to-day. To-morrow—ah well! Who can say what may be possible to-morrow?"

General Bulvanoff found the Politzmaister at home. He was requested by the servant to wait in the hall whilst he took his card to his master, for he did not know whether he would see anyone; but he returned almost immediately and asked the general to follow him. Alexander von Belaieff came forward to meet his old friend, but there was no enthusiasm in his greeting. He seemed almost ashamed to speak, and hastily withdrew his hand from the general's friendly grip.

"This is a bad business!" said Bulvanoff; "but there must be a way out of it. I know your boy Yuri well enough to be certain that it was an accident, or that he did it in self-defence."

"Don't speak of him!" the Politzmaister exclaimed. "He has brought disgrace upon our name. A von Belaieff guilty of murder! It is incredible!"

"Bosh!" said the old general irritably. "The boy killed his man in fair fight—as dozens of the Belaieffs have done in their day."

"He is a murderer; and he will be sent to Siberia as a criminal. He has brought ruin on the house of Belaieff, I tell you. I disown him!"

The general tugged at his grey moustache and eyed his friend curiously.

"Does he admit it?" he asked.

"He will say nothing—and the evidence against him is overwhelming. It was a cold-blooded, deliberate murder."

"Well I happen to know that it was nothing of

the kind," said the general stoutly. "He was attempting to rescue a Jewish girl from Struganoff who was carrying her off; and Struganoff got killed in the struggle."

The Politzmaister walked restlessly up and down the room, with his hands clasped behind him, and his eyes fixed on the carpet.

"The fact that he was brawling in the streets for the possession of a Jewess does not make matters any better," he replied curtly.

"Damn it! The girl was Miriam Serkovski!" Bulvanoff shouted, with rising wrath.

"Who is Miriam Serkovski?" Belaieff demanded. To him all Jews were Jews, and he made no distinctions. They belonged to a different order of beings from the Belaieffs.

"The daughter of 'Nash Jacov' who was murdered by those pestilent *moujiks*, and a friend of mine, Belaieff—a friend of mine, remember."

"Oh, indeed!" said the Politzmaister coldly.

The general glared at him for a moment without speaking. Then he reflected that nothing was to be gained by losing his temper, and when he next spoke it was in conciliatory tones.

"I want you to give me an order to see Yuri," he said. "Perhaps I could induce him to give some account of the affair."

"It is impossible," the Politzmaister answered. "An order has come by telegram from St. Petersburg this morning that he is to be sent there for trial, and that no one is to have access to him pending his departure."

"To Petersburg! Why?"

"No reasons are given."

"But how did the news get there so quickly?"

"I don't know," Belaieff replied curtly. But, though he had no official knowledge on the subject, there was no doubt in the Politzmaister's mind as to the source from which the information had been received in St. Petersburg. And the fact that the Bishop of Courland had taken up the matter had materially helped him to harden his heart against his son.

"But surely you are not going to let the boy be taken to Petersburg without a protest? He is certain to be convicted if he goes there. Old von Raabe would enter a protest for you."

"The Governor of State declines to interfere in the case," said the Politzmaister.

General Bulvanoff rose to take his departure, with indignation in his soul. It seemed to him that there was a conspiracy against his young friend Yuri, and that his father was assisting in it.

"If I had a son," he said regretfully, "I should not allow him to be treated like that—not for the Holy Synod nor for the Tsar himself!"

"I have no son," Belaieff answered.

The old general looked at him sharply; then, with a shrug of the shoulders and a nod, he left the room.

When he was alone, Alexander Belaieff continued to walk up and down the room. His mind was in a torment of conflicting emotions. He did not believe that his son was guilty of a cold-blooded murder; he knew the reputation of Kotke Trubman, and the value to be attached to his evidence. But Yuri absolutely declined to speak or

to defend himself, and this obstinacy on the part of the son raised the ire of his father. If he were not guilty, Yuri, by his silence, was deliberately allowing the ancient name of Belaieff to be dragged in the mire. General Bulvanoff had thrown a little light on the subject when he had spoken of the Jewish woman; but it was a lurid light which the Politzmaister had no wish to expose to view, since it only added a fresh indignity to the name of Belaieff. It accounted, too, in a measure for Yuri's silence. He might well be ashamed to confess to the cause of the quarrel which had ended in Struganoff's death. Presumably the general had heard the story from this Jewish woman herself, since she was a friend of his; but what value would be attached to the word of a Jewess when opposed to the evidence of Trubman and the police officer who had arrested Yuri? Then the bishop had intervened—that was a very serious matter! It would mean ruin to himself, as well as to Yuri, to fly in the face of Zolotnikoff. No good could come from resisting the orders of the Holy Synod and the ministers of the Tsar. If they decreed that Yuri was to be tried in Petersburg—to Petersburg he must go.

The door opened quietly, and Baroness von Belaieff crept into her husband's presence. She was a little, meek woman, who for five-and-twenty years had worshipped every word and action of the man she had married, and to whom her only son, Yuri, was very precious. She came to plead once more for her boy. It was a poor little faded heart that beat beneath the prim silk gown; but it was near to breaking for grief. Alexander Belaieff would not

listen; he repelled her with unnecessary harshness, and the little figure slipped out of the room again, choking back the sobs into her handkerchief.

She went back to her own room, and sat forlornly by the window, looking out across the coloured roofs and gilded domes of Jelgava. In all her married life she had never thought for herself—Alexander had always told her what she was to do, and she had done it unquestioning. But now he would not even speak of their beloved son Yuri, and he refused to allow her to go to the prison to see him. She was quite sure that Yuri had not done the dreadful things with which he was charged. If she could only see him, and hear from his own dear lips the story of that awful night, she was certain that all would be well. But Alexander would not let her go. To disobey her husband never entered her head—for of course Alexander must be right. But, for the first time in her married life, she had acted without consulting her husband, for the reason that she dreaded his refusal. That was when she sent money to Yuri in prison. As she sat by the window, she was glad that she had sent him money, and she prayed that Alexander might not find it out.

There had been lawyers in the house the day before, who had remained with her husband in his sitting-room for more than an hour. When they had gone, Alexander had come to her and said that she must not think any more of Yuri, for he was unworthy of the name of Belaieff; and that he had made a new will, from which Yuri's name was omitted. She had cried a great deal about it, but she had not dared to remonstrate with her husband. Then, in her misery,

she remembered that she had five thousand roubles of her own, and she sent them all secretly to Yuri, with a little note telling him not to let his father know.

Alexander Belaieff, having said that his son's name was to be forgotten, had not mentioned to the Baroness that he was to be taken to St. Petersburg for trial. When she questioned him about Yuri he declined to answer. Then, when she heard General Bulvanoff's voice in the hall, she felt a ray of hope; perhaps he would persuade Alexander to forgive Yuri. She waited until he had gone, and went once more to implore Alexander to relent, only to be again repelled. There was nothing more that she could do—and so she sat by the window, crying quietly, and thinking of her dear boy in the prison beyond the golden cupolas of the cathedral.

General Bulvanoff returned to the house of Nikon Paskevitch, the priest, as he had promised. He had effected nothing by his excursion to the Politzmaister's home, and he was angry and disappointed. But the sight of Miriam softened his old heart; and as he held her hands in his, the tears trickled down the furrows in his cheeks. It was some moments before either of them could speak; but at last the old general found his voice.

"Poor little Rose of Sharon!" he said huskily, pressing her fingers with a sympathetic grip. "You must come away with me."

"Yes, yes!" Miriam whispered. "Take me away from Jelgava. I cannot bear to be here."

"We will go to-day."

"And Fräulein Erard?"

"Yes, of course. We will all three go to Bausk."

"How good you are!"

The old general turned his head away from her—he was ashamed of the kindly tears which would come, in spite of his determination to be cheerful.

Anna came in with Fräulein Erard, and he let go her hands.

"General Bulvanoff is going to take us back to Bausk," said Miriam. "Anna dear, I can never thank you for all that you have done—you must not think that we are ungrateful because we are going to leave you so suddenly."

"No, dearie, no! I understand," Anna answered. "Go away for a time—until it is safe for you to return."

"I don't think I shall ever come back," said Miriam sadly. "But you will come to me, Anna?"

"There, there, child!" Anna exclaimed uneasily, twisting the corner of her apron into a knot. Fräulein Erard, who appreciated the pain which parting meant to these two, made some excuse to take the general out into the garden, and Miriam and Anna were left alone together. The girl threw herself into the arms of her old nurse and sobbed; and Anna, smoothing out the dark tresses which pressed against her shoulder, tried with broken words to comfort her. Then, without raising her face from Anna's bosom, Miriam began to speak.

"Anna," she said earnestly, "there is something that I want you to do." She paused as though in difficulty to express herself.

"Yes, dearie."

"I want you to take a note from me to the young Baron von Belaieff in prison. You are the wife of a

priest—they will admit you to the prisoners. I have written it because I love him. He saved me from I know not what, and he tried to save all my people—I know that. I shall never see him again; but I must send him just this one letter, to tell him that I know what he has done. You will take it, Anna, won't you?"

And Anna, pressing her strong arms closer round her darling, promised to deliver it.

In the afternoon the old general returned to Bausk with Miriam and Fräulein Erard. He was firmly resolved that, when he had handed them over to the safe custody of his wife, he would return daily to Jelgava to see that justice were done to Miriam by her own people, both as regards her social status and her father's property.

Father Nikon returned from the old saw-mill earlier than usual. An order had been received that the *moujiks* from Vitebsk were to return to their homes next day, in consequence of the ill-feeling which their presence in Jelgava had aroused amongst the Jews. He was very much astonished when Anna, handing him a fifty kopek piece, told him to go off to the *traktir* and amuse himself for the evening, as she had a lot of things to do. But he had no scruples about going; and Anna was left alone in the house with the children.

At nine o'clock Anna stood by the gate at the far end of the garden beneath the trees. Out of the darkness a man came towards her. He slipped a silver crucifix into her hand; and Anna opened the gate and led him towards the old powder magazine in the thicket.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.

THERE was consternation in the Palace of the Bishop of Courland. For three days His Holiness had been missing, and neither his secretary nor the members of his household could give any explanation of his absence. At first the secretary had preserved a discreet silence, thinking that his master might have reasons of his own for absenting himself, and that he would resent any misplaced anxiety on his account. But when, at the end of three days, no news had been received from him, the secretary could no longer conceal from the household that there was something very unusual in the protracted absence of the bishop. Having questioned his body-servants as to the last occasion on which they had seen their master, and having convinced himself that none of them could throw any light on his strange disappearance, he went to the office of the Politzmaister, and laid the facts before him.

The news spread rapidly through the town that the bishop had disappeared, and caused the utmost

sensation. Speculation was rife as to what had become of him; and many there were who suspected that the Jews had spirited him away; for it was common knowledge that Zolotnikoff was bitterly hostile to the Jews, and there were not wanting those who attributed the recent massacre in Jelgava to his instigation.

The Politzmaister telegraphed the news to St. Petersburg, and asked for instructions. From the police to the Minister of the Interior, and from him to the Procurator, the story was passed rapidly. Then the Procurator turned up the report which he had received from Zolotnikoff only five days before, and read it carefully in the light of subsequent events. It was clear, from the report, that the students of the Gymnasium had joined with the Jews in a revolutionary movement, and that Baron Yuri von Belaieff, the son of the Politzmaister of Jelgava, was the leader and instigator of the movement. The same young nobleman had also laid violent hands on a woman (whose nationality was not stated), and had murdered a gallant officer of the army who had attempted to rescue her. For the murder he had been arrested, but the report recommended that the charges of conspiracy made against him should be fully investigated, when the Bishop of Courland was certain that a widespread plot to undermine the authority of the Government would be disclosed.

Acting on the advice of his subordinate, the Procurator had telegraphed that the young Baron was to be sent to St. Petersburg for trial; but this fresh development in the situation demanded that other and prompt measures should be taken. Accordingly,

an order was telegraphed to the Governor of State of Courland that the Gymnasium was to be closed forthwith, and a posse of police was dispatched to Jelgava to make a house-to-house search for the bishop in the Jewish quarter of the town.

Yuri Belaieff awaited in solitary confinement the order for his removal to St. Petersburg. The gaoler who brought him his daily rations had told him that he was to be taken to the capital for trial; but he could give him no further particulars. It was this same gaoler who had delivered to him, on the day previous to the announcement of his departure for St. Petersburg, a bulky letter from his mother, containing notes to the value of five thousand roubles. The letter which accompanied them had touched him very deeply. This message from his mother was the only thing that had broken down the barrier of indifference to fate which the incidents of the past few months had raised round him. At least his mother cared—the mother who had seemed to play such a small part in his life. She had always said—"Your father wishes this," or "your father tells me that." There had been no confidences between them, because of the third entity, his father, who entered into all their relations, and coloured her every opinion. It is impossible to confide in one whose judgment is entirely swayed by external influences. So Yuri had come to regard his father as the essential factor in his home life, and had assigned to his mother the part of interpreter of his father's wishes.

But now, as he read the hastily written note, he realised that he had never before understood the

undemonstrative little lady whom he had been taught to call "mother." He had taken it for granted that she would fall in with his father's views of his conduct without question; and he had hardly considered her in his decision to hold his peace before his accusers. It was too late now to make amends. All that he could do was to scribble on a scrap of paper a few words of thanks and a belated expression of love, which he wondered if she would understand, and bribe the gaoler to deliver it to the bearer of the letter in secret.

When, on the following day, the warder told him that he was to be taken to St. Petersburg, Yuri had felt no particular interest in the announcement. It mattered nothing to him before what tribunal he was to stand, or whether he were tried at all, since he knew that his case was prejudiced. Three days went by, and he was still in the prison at Jelgava. No one but the warder had been to see him, and he was kept all day long in his stinking cell. Would they never take him away to Petersburg?

He could hear the voice of the warder talking to someone at the far end of the long passage outside the cells; then the jangle of his keys and the grating of a lock as the key turned in it. After a few minutes the door of a cell was slammed to, and the key turned again in the lock. The voice of the gaoler and the footsteps of two people came down the passage. They stopped again, and another cell door was opened, and after a brief interval closed again. And so, cell by cell, the gaoler and his companion came down the passage, until they stood outside the door of Yuri's cell.

"You can't go into this one," said the warder abruptly. "He is to be kept 'solitary.'"

Then a woman's voice asked:

"Who is he?"

"Someone who doesn't want to see the likes of you," the warder replied, with a coarse laugh. "He's a highborn aristocrat—none of your foolish *moujiks*."

"A 'political'?" the woman queried.

"'Political' and criminal too, so far as I understand. But it's none of your business who he is."

Then the woman sank her voice to a whisper, and Yuri could hear no more of their conversation; until, presently, the gaoler spoke again in a conciliatory tone:

"Well, I suppose as the wife of the pope you have the right to see them all."

Then the key grated in the lock, and his cell door was opened. Anna Paskevitch and the warder entered.

"I come from Father Nikon," she announced abruptly. "He wishes to know whether you are in need of spiritual comfort."

Anna's eyes looked straight into Yuri's as she delivered the message, and there was a twinkle of amusement in them when she mentioned the "spiritual comfort" which she was promising in her husband's name. Yuri took his cue from her, wondering vaguely why she had come to see him.

"I suppose it is only supplied on payment," he said with a bitter laugh.

The warder lounged in the doorway of the cell jingling his bunch of keys; something in the passage attracted his attention, and he turned his head away

from them. Anna came close to Yuri and thrust a letter into his hands, saying aloud:

"There are some things which are worth paying for; but which you can have for nothing."

"Ah, but that does not apply to the ministrations of the priests," said Yuri, secreting the letter in his pocket, "which are worth nothing and cost a great deal."

"I am afraid, young man, that you are a child of the devil," said Anna severely. "It is not wonderful that our good priests are starving, and that the whole country is full of heretics, when there are scoffers like you abroad. It is not surprising that our holy Bishop Zolotnikoff has disappeared from amongst us, since for wickedness Jelgava is only to be compared to the Cities of the Plain."

Yuri looked into her eyes enquiringly, and Anna nodded reassuringly.

"Come along, Matushka!" said the warder with impatience. "You are only wasting your breath talking holiness here."

As the door slammed behind them, Yuri hastily took from his pocket the letter which Anna had given him, and tore open the envelope. It was from Miriam Serkovski. It told of her safety; confirmed the death of her father, and ended with sincere expressions of gratitude for all that he had done for her and for her people.

"Whatever the future may hold in store for you, the prayers of myself and of the whole Jewish community in Jelgava will be with you. I shall never cease to think of you. If the devotion of a Hebrew girl can sustain you in the hour of trial, do not forget

that I am yours for ever. I am prepared to come forward and tell all that I know of the events of that awful night—you have only to send for me when you need me. If you do not send for me we may never meet again; but that makes no difference to my love for you."

Miriam wrote no word of the trouble which had befallen her amongst her own people. She did not wish to add to the burden of his griefs by inflicting her own sorrows upon him; but she had told him that General Bulvanoff had offered her a home for the present at Bausk, and that she and her companion would go there immediately.

Yuri read the letter over and over again with deep thankfulness in his heart that she had escaped unharmed from the clutches of Kotke Trubman. Ever since his arrest he had been in a fever of anxiety regarding her. Now that he knew that she was safe, and that her first thought had been for him, he felt that life still held something of sweetness, though he might never taste of it.

So Miriam's letter brought to him great contentment of mind. He put it away carefully in the lining of his coat, together with the crushed rose and the piece of lace which she had given him in the garden at Bausk. The money which his mother had sent him he had concealed in his long boots, for he still wore the outer garments of the *sachar morojhnik*, and the ample knee boots made excellent receptacles for his wealth. As he sat on the edge of the plank bed in his cell, with his elbows on his knees and his chin supported on the palms of his hands, thinking of the incidents of the day, he felt happier than

he had been since his visit to Bausk. He ceased to ponder over the injustice and tyranny of man's judgment and the hopelessness of it all, and looked at the other side of the great problem of life. There was some good in the world, after all—his mother was good, and it was only in the hour of adversity that he had realised the fact. Miriam was good—but that he had never doubted. Old General Bulvanoff was good, and Anna Paskevitch, the wife of the drunken pope.

As he thought over Anna's visit to him, he began to wonder what she meant when she had spoken of the disappearance of Zolotnikoff. He had longed to question her about it; but the presence of the warder prevented him. In answer to his look of enquiry Anna had nodded, thereby confirming what she had stated. Had Zolotnikoff been recalled to St. Petersburg, or was he dead? But whatever his fate might be, it was clear that Anna no longer regarded the bishop as a dangerous personage in Jelgava.

That night, as he was preparing to go to sleep, the warder, with a file of police, came to his cell and informed him that he was to start for St. Petersburg at once. Yuri was glad to go. He knew that so long as he remained in Jelgava there was no chance of his trial taking place. It was a relief to his mind to feel that he was soon to hear his fate; and he left Jelgava without regret.

The Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul stretches its grim walls along the Neva. The little windows looking out just above the water resemble the square portholes of an ocean "liner;" and the thin, golden spire of the Cathedral towering above them might

almost be the mast of this huge convict ship. Behind the walls, which once were intended for defence, there are now numberless prison cells. Their floors are beneath the level of the river, and the square, barred windows, which look out across it, are out of reach of the occupants, whose view is restricted to four stone walls—the outer one green with the damp slime of the river, the inner one provided with a strong, bolted door which is but seldom opened. The Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul swallows up men alive. Many have gone down the interminable subterranean passages, which give access to the cells, never to return. They pass within, and nothing more is heard of them; nor are the crimes which they have committed made known. The dragon of the Neva has claimed another victim—that is all.

As Yuri Belaieff entered the Fortress, chained between his guards, he could hear the sweet tones of the "Boje Materi" proceeding from the Cathedral, and then the anthem, "How lovely are Thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts!" But in a few moments the singing was drowned in the coarse laughter of the men of the guard on the prison gates. Then he entered the passages beneath the ground, and under the escort of a warder and a file of the guard, he was taken to one of the cells with a window overlooking the Neva. There they left him, and he sat down on the plank bed. The words and notes of the anthem were still ringing in his ears—"How lovely are Thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts!" He raised his eyes and looked round the four walls of the cell. Beads of moisture oozed from the wall opposite to him, and trickled in devious courses down the slimy

surface. A beam of light from the window above fell aslant the cell, and illuminated a tarnished icon in the corner. It was a picture of the "Lord of Hosts."

"It is blasphemy—rank blasphemy!" he cried aloud; and a voice without the cell door laughed. Yuri sprang up, and seizing the wooden pitcher which stood by the door, dashed it at the icon and split it in two. The pieces clattered down on the stone floor, and Yuri stamped on them savagely.

"It was put there to mock us! To tell the prisoners that there is a power in Russia above God, and that his dwellings are not lovely!"

He threw himself down on the plank bed and buried his face in his arms. The door opened almost noiselessly, and a man's face peered in at him. Yuri started up, ashamed that anyone should have witnessed his outburst; but there was no one there, and the door was closed. For a few minutes he sat up, staring at the door, as though he would convince himself that he had been mistaken in imagining that someone was watching him. Then he lay down again, and the feeling of hopeless despair, which had been his constant companion for months past, took full possession of him. What was the good of contending further?

"It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life," he murmured.

For a long time he lay quite still, exhausted by hunger and the violence of his emotions. It must surely be a hideous dream, and he would presently awake, and the whole fabric of the illusion would be dispelled. He was certain that he must be dreaming,

for, though his mind was in an agony of despair, his body was in a state of perfect repose. He did not wish to move or to be disturbed, only to lie for ever as he was lying now, with his limbs relaxed and his head pillowed upon his arms.

He started up again, for something had touched him. His sudden movement was followed by the rattle and scutter of startled rats. The light was waning fast, and the cell was almost in darkness; but in the corner he could see two rats gnawing a fragment of the plaster frame of the icon, whilst two more regarded him suspiciously, without any trace of fear in their bright eyes. Presently one of them came across the floor towards him, and began to gnaw the sole of his boot as he sat on the bed. The two who had been occupied with the broken picture frame, left it and joined their companion. Yuri lifted his foot, and the three drew off to the middle of the cell, where they sat looking at him calmly. They seemed to regard him as an intruder who was only to be tolerated because he afforded them nourishment. Yuri was wondering how he was to make a treaty with his companions, when the warder came in and silently deposited a wooden pitcher of water and a platter of bread and salt on the narrow wooden bench near the wall. Then he picked up the empty pitcher, and without apparently noticing the pieces of the broken icon which were scattered on the floor, he left the cell, bolting the door behind him.

When he had gone, the rats came out from the corner to which they had retired, and made straight for the bread. Yuri interposed.

"No, no!" he exclaimed, seizing the loaf in his hands. "Share and share alike. You cannot have it all!"

He tore off a portion of the bread and threw it to them on the floor. And so the compact was made between them, on the terms of equal shares.

The next day Yuri was taken before the examining magistrate. The charges against him were numerous, including murder, sedition and conspiracy. He declined to plead, claiming that his trial was illegal; that as a Courlander he had the right to be tried in the Duchy of Courland by the laws of Courland, and that, therefore, the court had no jurisdiction over him. His objections were summarily dismissed by the magistrate, who proceeded to examine him on the charges. But Yuri declined to answer, and after a few ineffectual threats the magistrate gave up the attempt to extract a confession or incriminating admissions from him of the crimes with which he was charged.

But there was another matter about which he had received instructions to examine the prisoner—and that was the disappearance of the Bishop of Courland. Yuri listened attentively to what the magistrate had to say on the subject, and gathered from the questions which were put to him, that Zolotnikoff was supposed to have been murdered, and that he, Yuri Belaieff, was held responsible for the crime. But to all the magistrate's questions Yuri refused to reply; and he was finally ordered back to his cell by the infuriated official, who hinted at the dire consequences which his obstinacy would bring down upon him.

For a week Yuri remained in his cell in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, with the rats as his only companions. Now and then he was conscious that someone was standing outside the door listening, or peering through the grating at him; and once the door opened again, as on the first day of his incarceration, and the watcher on the threshold looked within. On both these occasions Yuri had been on his bed, which was evidently not visible from the grating.

At the end of a week he was again brought out and marched through the long passages to a room in a distant part of the Fortress. He found himself standing before three men who were seated at a table in the middle of the large, bare room. Against the wall, beneath the windows, were standing Kotke Trubman, the police officer from Jelgava who had arrested him, and a monk of the Orthodox Church. Besides these there were prison officials and soldiers in the room, and a clerk at a side table, who was preparing to take notes of the proceedings.

The man at the head of the table gabbled through a form of words, and the trial began. Yuri was asked to plead to the charges brought against him, and he answered firmly, "Not guilty." The evidence of Kotke and the police officer was taken; but Yuri scarcely listened to their statements—he knew already what they had to say against him. He felt more curiosity concerning the monk, who was next sworn and examined by the court. He had never seen the man before, and he wondered what he could possibly have to do with the case. Then, in low monotonous words, he heard himself condemned as

a heretic and blasphemer, who had wantonly destroyed the icon in his cell, and had cursed God. And Yuri remembered the strange sounds outside the door of his cell, and the eyes which, from time to time, peered at him through the grating on the door.

The court was cleared, and he stood before his judges alone, except for the warder beside him. For a few minutes there was a whispered conversation between the three men at the table. Then the president of the court addressed him. He pointed out to Yuri that he had been guilty of the murder of Struganoff; that he had conspired to overthrow the authority of the Tsar in Jelgava, and had stirred up sedition amongst the students of the Gymnasium. These were very serious crimes which must be expiated by an exemplary sentence; but the court had reason to believe that a crime of a still more outrageous nature had been committed with the full knowledge of the prisoner, and that he was implicated in it. He referred to the disappearance of His Holiness the Bishop of Courland. It had been conclusively proved that the prisoner was an enemy to the Holy Church and to the Christian religion; and, therefore, the suspicion against him practically amounted to certainty. But the clemency of the Tsar and of the Holy Synod would be extended to the prisoner, if he would make a full confession of the plot against the bishop, keeping back nothing which could throw any light on the affair.

The president paused for a reply; and Yuri laughed in the face of the court. It was a mirthless laugh, but it electrified the three men seated at the table.

"Take him away!" the president exclaimed, with a wave of the hand.

The warder led Yuri back to his cell. He was an unemotional man, who had conducted hundreds of prisoners from their sentence to their doom; but he felt that the occasion demanded comment.

"You have done it this time!" he muttered. "You might have got off cheaply, if you had spoken up. But it isn't everyone who enjoys the privilege of a trial before three members of the Holy Synod. You can comfort yourself with that!"

It was not until the next day that Yuri heard that he had been sentenced to twenty years penal servitude in the Government of Udinsk.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ANNA'S SECRET.

FOR two months Miriam and her companion stayed with the Bulvanoffs at Bausk. The old general went frequently to Jelgava on her behalf, and had several meetings with Rabbi Shapira, who had been appointed Chief Rabbi of Courland in succession to Daniel Herz. He had no difficulty in persuading the Rabbi to make full enquiry into the case of Miriam Serkovski, with the result that Miriam was received back into the congregation, and the stigma which had been put upon her was unreservedly withdrawn. There was not a Jew in Jelgava who did not rejoice at the decision of the Rabbi with regard to the daughter of "Nash Jacov;" for both father and daughter were beloved by all. The fact that Miriam inherited two hundred thousand roubles from her father did not lessen the satisfaction which was felt at her return to the fold; and many were the speculations which were indulged in, as to the lucky man whom she would endow with this vast "nadan" when the time of mourning for her father was over. Throughout all Russian Jewry the report of her beauty and wealth was known—every "shadchen"

(professional match-maker) had her name on his books, and they only awaited the end of the days of mourning to inundate her with proposals of marriage with all the most eligible men in Israel.

Had the "shadchens" and the young men known what was in the heart of Miriam Serkovski, they would have been filled with consternation. For Miriam was resolved never to marry. All her love was given to Yuri Belaieff; and since duty and religion forbade their union, she refused to profane the name of love by being joined to another—the very idea was repugnant to her. In spite of the reproach attaching to unmarried women in Israel, she would remain single.

During her stay at Bausk she often discussed the future with Fräulein Erard and the Bulvanoffs. She was determined, she told them, to devote her life to the service of others. Her good friends humoured her, thinking that grief at her father's death was responsible for her attitude of self-abnegation; and that in time she would return to her former happy self, and enjoy the good things which the world held out to her. But when, one day, she definitely announced that she intended to return to Jelgava, and to convert her father's house into a home for children, not one of them had the heart to dissuade her from it. Fräulein Erard declared that she would stay with Miriam, and assist her in the management of the home; and the old general gave the scheme his blessing, and promised his support.

Towards the end of November, Miriam returned to Jelgava with her companion, and began at once to put her plans into execution. The home was to be

for children, irrespective of creed and race, who, from misfortune or negligence, were destitute and in misery. They were to be well fed, well clothed, and well educated, and, above all, their lives were to be made as happy as possible. Miriam devoted herself heart and soul to the enterprise, and superintended the alterations which were to be made in the house, to render it suitable for its new purposes. The offices on the ground floor were to be turned into school-rooms and a dining-room; the bedrooms converted into dormitories; and in the yard at the back, where in former days her father had kept his stores of meat, vegetables and flour, a little hospital was to be erected for sick children.

The day after her return home, Miriam paid a visit to the house of Nikon Paskevitch. The little green house belonged to her now; but she had no intention of turning Anna and her husband out of their home. There were many things about which she was anxious to question Anna; but her chief anxiety was to know the fate of her lover. His name had never been mentioned at Bausk. The Baroness Bulvanoff had cautioned her husband on no account to speak of Yuri Belaieff, and Miriam had shrunk from questioning them about him. She cherished the hope that he would be acquitted; but her heart ached for news of him.

Anna welcomed her with the warmth and impetuosity which she had always shown for her darling; but Miriam noticed a great change in her old nurse. There was a restless expression in the eyes, and a drawn look about the mouth, which were new to her. The kindly vigour and decision, which

in the old days characterised her words and actions, had given place to a nervous hesitation, which at times was almost painful. After the first greetings, when Miriam suggested that Anna should take her to her little room in the old powder magazine, so that they could enjoy a long chat without fear of interruption, Anna became visibly agitated.

"No, no, child!" she exclaimed, glancing nervously over her shoulder. "Not there! It is too cold. Look! there is a foot of snow in the garden, and the water-butt is frozen solid."

"Of course! How stupid of me!" Miriam exclaimed. "I was forgetting that there is no stove there. We can talk just as well by your cosy kitchen fire, and I have so many things to ask you!"

A look of relief came into Anna's eyes. She drew up a chair for Miriam and stood by her.

"First of all, Anna, dear, tell me about the young Baron von Belaieff," said Miriam, making no effort to conceal her anxiety on his behalf.

"Have you not heard?" Anna exclaimed in surprise.

"I have heard nothing since I have been at Bausk. They kept everything from me in their kindness."

"He has been sent to Siberia. Poor Gospodin Yuri!"

Miriam bit her lip, and choked back the sob in her throat. She could not believe that he had really been condemned.

"Where? For how long?"

"Udinsk—for twenty years."

There was a pause; and Anna laid her hand lovingly on Miriam's shoulder.

"I gave him your letter before he went away," she said; "but I could say nothing because the warder was in the cell. They took him to Petersburg the next day. He was there for three weeks, and then he was sent to Moscow. That is all that I know about him."

"And his father? Did he do nothing for him?"

"The old beast!" Anna exclaimed, with a sudden return to her former self. "He wouldn't raise a finger to help him! And they say that his mother is dying of a broken heart."

"But the Governor of State?"

"They are all alike! They are all afraid of the Holy Synod! And so they sacrificed Gospodin Yuri to save their own wretched skins."

Miriam was silent. Her thoughts were with her lover on the dreary road to Siberia. It was for her sake and her people's that he had been condemned; but beyond prayers and pious aspirations, neither she nor they had done anything for him. She had offered to give evidence on his behalf at his trial; but Yuri had not sent for her. Perhaps he knew that it would be useless—or perhaps he would not allow her name to be brought into the case. But it was too late now—he was condemned. Had she only known that he was to be taken from Jelgava and tried in St. Petersburg, she would have gone to the Governor of State in person, and told him all that she knew. But the Bulvanoffs had never mentioned Yuri's name, and she concluded that he must have been acquitted —or, at the worst, that his trial had not yet taken place. It seemed to her that the responsibility for his banishment rested on her shoulders. She ought

to have insisted on knowing what had become of him, and not have trusted to Yuri to send for her, or to his father and the Governor of State to use their influence on his behalf.

"Oh, Anna, it was my fault!" she cried piteously. "I ought to have spoken."

"Nonsense, child!" Anna replied. "You don't suppose that they would have listened to you! It was I who set Gospodin Yuri against them—and it was my fault that harm came to him. That is the worst of being a woman—we are always doing the right thing at the wrong time. If only I had made up my mind to do it before!"

"To do what?" Miriam asked innocently.

Anna started and looked nervously towards the window.

"Nothing, child, nothing! I was thinking of all the trouble which that man brought to Jelgava."

"You mean the Bishop of Courland? But he has gone now."

"Yes, he has gone, and he will never trouble us any more."

"What happened to him, Anna?" Miriam asked. "I heard that he had disappeared. The general told me that; and said that it was a good thing for everybody. What became of him?"

"How should I know?" said Anna, busying herself with the *samovar* and tea-things. "He has gone where not even their secret police from Petersburg can find him, though they turned the whole town upside down, and dragged the river with hooks. He has gone! that is the great thing, dearie—and you can go about without fear of his violence."

Miriam said no more about it, and the subject was dropped. Presently Father Nikon came in, and was profuse in his greeting to Miriam. He had taken little Vera for a walk, and the child ran gladly to Miriam, and she told them all of the home for little children which she intended to keep in her house in Marien Street. Then they sat down to tea. And so the time passed until Miriam said that she must go home. Anna went with her to the door, begging her to come again soon.

"I have missed you so, dearie," she said, looking lovingly in the girl's face; "and I have been unhappy whilst you were away."

"You are not well, Anna, dear," Miriam answered. "I can see by your face that you are not well. I am glad that I have come back to look after you."

Anna laughed nervously at Miriam's anxiety on her account.

"There is nothing the matter with me," she said.

And then Miriam said good-bye, and Anna watched the tall figure, enveloped in the long fur cloak, until it passed out of sight.

She went back to the kitchen where her husband and children, having finished their tea, were playing in front of the fire. The simple-minded Nikon was never happier than when he was with his children; and it was then that he was seen to the best advantage, for, in spite of his many failings, he was an affectionate father. Anna stood for a moment in the doorway looking at the group by the fire. Then, with something like a sigh, she began to clear away the tea-things and carry them to the little scullery which opened on to the garden. It was bitterly cold

in the scullery, for there was no stove in it, and the outer door let in the biting winter air; nevertheless Anna shut behind her the door which gave access to it from the kitchen, and began to wash up the plates and cups in a bowl, which she had filled with hot water from the kettle on the fire. From time to time she paused in her task and listened to the voices of Nikon and the children. They were still romping, and the shouts of laughter and cries of Vera and the baby Dossie convinced her that they were not troubling themselves about her—she might dawdle over her washing-up for an hour before her absence would be noticed. But Anna did not dawdle. When the things were all washed and put away, she took from the shelf the remains of the loaf of black bread, and filling a pitcher from the *samovar* threw a slice of lemon into it. Then, listening once more to the shouts of merriment in the next room, she noiselessly opened the outer door and slipped out into the garden.

In order to explain this mysterious conduct on the part of Anna Paskevitch, it is necessary to go back to a certain night in the month of September, when Anna was standing by the gate at the end of the garden, waiting for the Bishop of Courland to return her husband's crucifix to her. He had come, and she had taken him through the thicket to the old powder magazine, in which a solitary tallow candle burned dimly. She had led him by the hand through the outer to the inner compartment, which was almost in darkness. Her left hand held his, and in the right, beneath her shawl, she grasped the handle of the knife which, the day before, she had taken from the kitchen drawer and thrown back again. She had

steeled her heart to do that from which her whole nature revolted, for the sake of Miriam Serkovski, and for the peace of Jelgava. Over and over again she had argued it all out, to satisfy herself that she was justified in taking the life of this man who was a scourge to society, and over whom there was no law; but she had failed to convince her conscience of the righteousness of her cause. Then she thought of "Nash Jacov" and the Chief Rabbi, of Yuri Belaieff, who might yet be saved if Zolotnikoff were dead, and, most of all, of Miriam, whom he meant to corrupt. And thinking of them she took vengeance to her heart, and banished the voice of conscience.

And now she stood face to face with him in the dark recess of the old powder house; she with her back to the wall, and Zolotnikoff near the edge of the open trap which led to the cellar below. His hand was still in hers, and she could feel the quick-beating pulses which brutal passion stirred in him. She knew the cause of his excitement and of the heavy breathing which seemed almost to choke him, and the knowledge roused the hatred within her to action. The knife flashed from beneath her shawl, and in the light which shone dimly from the candle in the outer room Zolotnikoff saw it. Snatching his hand from hers he stepped backwards to avoid the blow, and, with a cry, fell through the open trap into the cellar. For a moment Anna stood still with the knife poised in the air; then dropping on her hands and knees she crawled to the opening in the floor and closed the iron trap-door over it. She rose hastily and fled from the house, bolting the heavy door behind her.

For two days she dared not return to the old powder magazine. From the back door of the house she listened intently; but no sounds reached her. She did not know whether he were alive or dead. The fall was only some ten feet; it was unlikely that it would have killed him. And then a horrible idea occurred to her—what if he had piled up the old boxes, and managing to reach the trap-door, had opened it and escaped? The uncertainty was awful —and yet she felt as if she could not return to the place. And if she did go back, what was she to do? She had intended to kill him—to rid the world of his odious life; but she knew that she could never again make the attempt. To descend into the cellar and murder him deliberately was an impossibility—her whole nature shrank from the idea. And again she cried out against fate for making a woman of her. She despised herself for her want of determination, and for the weakness which made her think with pity of the man whom she had condemned to death.

On the morning of the third day, when Nikon was out, she crept down the garden to the squat stone building among the trees, and listened at the door. There was not a sound. She unbolted the door and pushed it open and again paused to listen, but still there was silence. She passed through the outer room and groped her way in the dark of the recess to the iron trap-door. It was closed as she had left it. Then courage returned to her, and with it the practical common-sense which had served her so well all her life. She stooped down and raised the trap. As she did so there was a movement in the cellar beneath, and the sound of footsteps. Anna peered

into the darkness, and a voice from below called to her.

"Holy Mother, is it Thou? Give Thy servant bread that he may live."

"The man must be starving," said Anna to herself, "and I had never thought of it!"

Then she closed the trap and returned to the house for bread and water. She lowered them down in a basket, and the poor creature took them, returning thanks to the Holy Mother for her goodness.

Thus day by day for two months Anna had fed the bishop in the cellar of the old magazine. That he was mad there was not a doubt in Anna's mind —for who but a madman would take the wife of Nikon Paskevitch for the *Boje Materi?* She never spoke to him; but sometimes she would listen to his ramblings to assure herself that he was quite mad. The mania had taken a religious form. He imagined that he was a soul in the grave, and that the other grisly occupant of the cellar was his dead body waiting for the Resurrection. He dragged the skeleton of the silversmith's wife beneath the trap-door, so that the Holy Mother might look upon it with pity when she paid her daily visit to the grave. When the cold weather set in Anna brought an old coat which Nikon had discarded, and lowered it in the basket to him. And Zolotnikoff at once began to wrap up the skeleton in it, mumbling that the body must be clothed.

As the weeks went by Anna began to ask herself what was to be the end of it? The strain of the secret, which she shared with no one, began to tell upon her, and she could see no prospect of release.

Zolotnikoff might live for years in the filthy cellar; and she would have to go on, day after day and, perhaps, year after year, feeding him. It would surely have been better if she had killed him outright, as she had intended, rather than that he should linger on in madness, and finally die of disease in the loathsome hole where she had confined him. His death would be just as much due to her action as if she had stabbed him at first.

Then Miriam returned, and it became evident that the difficulties of keeping her secret would be greatly increased. It was easy to hoodwink her dear, stupid husband, who had always entertained a superstitious dread of the magazine, and never by any chance went near it. But it was different with Miriam. Often in the summer they had sat together in the little outer room which she had prepared for Miriam's use; and though the cold weather furnished a valid excuse for staying away from the magazine, Anna could not be certain that Miriam might not go to it in her absence.

The day after Miriam's visit Anna came to a decision, and forthwith proceeded to carry it out. She sent Nikon on an errand to the far end of the town; and when she had put the children to bed, she went with a candle and the ladder to the old powder house. Opening the trap-door, she lowered the ladder into the cellar, and called to Zolotnikoff to come up. The poor mad creature thought that the Day of Resurrection had come, and, loath to leave his body behind, tried to drag the skeleton up the ladder with him. It was with difficulty that Anna could persuade him to drop the gruesome object; but at last he let go of it, and the bones clattered down on

to the floor. Then he emerged from the trap—a pitiable spectacle; emaciated, filthy, with his face almost hidden in the matted growth of hair and beard.

Anna looked at him closely, holding the candle above her head so that the light fell on his face. It would be quite impossible for anyone to recognise in the pitiable object before her the late Bishop of Courland. But Anna was determined to run no risks.

"Who are you?" she asked.

Zolotnikoff fell upon his knees and raised his hands in supplication.

"Holy Mother, I am a nameless soul. Have mercy upon me!"

"But when you were alive—who were you?" Anna insisted.

"That was a thousand years ago," he answered pensively. "I cannot remember."

"Think! Think!" she cried, in terror lest he should recall the past. But Zolotnikoff only shook his head.

"It is too long ago, Holy Mother. I cannot remember."

"Then come with me."

Anna took him by the hand and led him out of the old house. Zolotnikoff was very weak, and it was with difficulty that he could follow her. She dragged him through the shrubbery to the gate at the back of the garden and out into the lane beyond. Drawing the shawl across her face, she hurried him down the lane into the highway at the end of it. Then through the streets of the town under the dimly burning lamps, until they stood opposite the lunatic asylum.

"Knock at the door there," said Anna, pointing to

the entrance, "and tell them who you are, and who brought you here."

Zolotnikoff raised a thin hand and knocked. And Anna, snatching her hand from his arm, fled.

"Holy Mother, do not leave me!" he cried after her; but she disappeared in the darkness, and Zolotnikoff, overcome by weakness, sank down on the threshold.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MARC LOGINOFF.

FOR miles the great white plain stretched away into the distance under a cloudless sky. On the horizon a dark patch of forest stood out above the dead level of the snow-clad steppe, the fringe of a huge carpet of verdure. Here and there on the plain a desolate homestead or a collection of wretched wooden houses marked the habitations of man in a primitive state, and bore witness, by their isolation from one another, to the sparseness of the population in this inhospitable region.

Crawling like a caterpillar over the face of the plain was a straggling column of prisoners and their escort, heading slowly Eastwards. The rest-camp, towards which they were marching, was still many versts away, near the edge of the forest; but the convicts travelled slowly, and it was evident to the commander of the escort that night would overtake them before they reached their destination, unless the wretched prisoners could be induced to mend their pace. So he shouted orders to his subordinates to hurry them on; and lash and rifle-butt were applied

unmercifully to urge the stragglers forward. The ranks closed up under the persuasive methods of the mounted Cossacks; but five of the gang threw themselves down on the snow by the road-side, unable to go further. The rear-guard which followed with the sledges for the sick and such women as were unable to walk, picked them up and put them upon the already overloaded sleighs. But one was found to be dead. Him they buried hastily by the road-side, and hurried on again to overtake the column.

The gang was in very bad shape, there could be no doubt about that. Two months ago it had started from Moscow, a *bolshaia partia* of 430 prisoners; but now they numbered only 310. Disease, the knout and the rifle had accounted for the balance. Some of the young students, who were amongst the "politicals," had mutinied against the brutality of the treatment which they received at the hands of the commander of the escort, and had been shot by his order. Others had made a break for liberty, and had been knouted to death. Consumption and scurvy had claimed many victims. Those who remained were dejected and broken down by the severity of the treatment which they received. There was no spirit left in them, and they were herded along the road by the escort, careless of their fate.

Yuri Belaieff marched in the ranks of the "criminals," clad in the long grey coat with the diamond in the middle of the back, and with his arms and legs in chains. Starvation and disease had set their mark upon him, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could retain his place in the ranks. But he was resolved to endure to the end. It could

not now be very far off, he thought, as he stumbled along in the trodden snow. A few days more, perhaps only a few hours, and he would drop by the wayside, as he had seen scores of his fellow prisoners fall, never to rise again.

"There must be some meaning to it all," he mused. It was the great question which had engrossed his mind for months past—the great unintelligible riddle of existence. "Why?—Why?" he had asked himself a thousand times since he first propounded the question to Miriam Serkovski in the garden at Bausk. And now he was soon to have the answer. He would know, when he fell for the last time from the ranks of the *rota*, he would know then the true meaning—perhaps. At least it would be no hardship to go—only a blessed relief from pain and misery and despair. There was nothing to keep him—no ties, and no ambitions which the dreary snow-swept plain and the lifetime of exile before him could fulfil. On the other side, when the rear-guard had scratched in the snow and left him behind, there might be the Tree of Knowledge—who could say?

He reeled helplessly from the ranks, and would have fallen, but a soldier of the escort seized him by the arm and supported him for a few paces, until he had partially recovered. Yuri murmured a word of thanks to the man and staggered forward again. A mounted Cossack who had witnessed the episode rode up and cut him across the shoulders with his heavy whip, shouting to him to keep in his place and not to lose ground. Then a halt was called by the commander, and the weary prisoners sank down exhausted on the snow. When the order was passed

down to march again, there were several who could not rise. Yuri was one of them, and the soldier who had befriended him came once more to his assistance. For the remaining six versts of the march the man carried for Yuri the bundle containing his belongings, and helped him with his arm to the rest-camp. The soldier of the escort had assisted him out of pity for his condition and from innate kindness of heart; but when Yuri put his hand into his pocket and gave him a rouble for his pains, the man, at first, could hardly credit his good fortune; and then another aspect of the case presented itself to his mind. If this "criminal" had roubles to spare, he was worth watching. For roubles are rare in Siberia, and there are no moral restrictions to the means by which they may be obtained.

The next day the road lay through the forest, where the path was so narrow that the sleighs could with difficulty pass between the trunks of the trees. The soldier kept near Yuri, watching him closely. Surely he could not go far without assistance? An end must come to it in the forest, where no one could see what happened. He wondered how much money the "criminal" had in his pocket. It was fortunate that the road twisted and turned through the forest, so that the head of the column was out of sight of the straggling "criminals" in rear. The commander could not see to what extent the column was lengthening out, nor what was happening in the rear.

Yuri, who had resolved that nothing should make him fall out from the ranks but death, for which he longed, trudged on with the rest of the gang, and close to his elbow marched the soldier. No one

spoke, for no one had the heart for conversation. The weight of the chains, added to the bundles which each man carried, gave the half-starved prisoners more to bear than their waning strength could support. Some had already flung away the little pack of their belongings, being unable to carry it further, nor caring what became of it and them. Others stooped painfully beneath their burdens, with starting eyes and laboured breath, counting the weary paces, and wondering how many more they would be able to take before the suffocating sensation which gripped at their throats overcame them.

Yuri was gradually dropping further and further to the rear of the column, and the soldier fell back with him, making no offer of assistance. Presently the sleighs in the rear with their escort overtook them. The soldier turned to the sergeant in charge and told him that he had been ordered to look after the prisoner, who was sick and unable to keep pace with the column, but who could walk well enough if he were given time. There was no room in the sledges, which were already overloaded with sick prisoners, and the sergeant allowed Yuri and the soldier to drop behind the rear-guard. The creaking of the sleighs in the snow and the tramp of feet died away in the distance; and Yuri suddenly pitched forward into the snow and lay still. His face was the colour of death, and on his yellow lips there were flecks of foam.

The soldier's chance had come at last; but he was more than half afraid to touch the body which lay at his feet. He put his canteen bottle to his mouth and nerved himself for the task with a long draught

of the vodka which it contained. Then he looked again; but Yuri's face was turned towards him, and his courage sank. From his pocket he pulled a filthy piece of rag and spread it over the pallid features and glazed eyes so that he might not see them. Then, with feverish haste, he thrust his hands into the pockets of the dead man. From the inside breast pocket he pulled out a leather case, and opening it found a bundle of notes—he had no time to count how many. There was something else in the pocket-book—an envelope with a letter inside and a piece of lace and some broken rose petals. They were no good to him, and he left them in the case, which he thrust back into the breast pocket, and went on with his search. There was very little in the other pockets, and in the boots, which he did not forget to examine, there was nothing. Then he reflected that the column must be two versts ahead of him, and that he must hurry to overtake it. He snatched the rag from Yuri's face, and, involuntarily, looked at him again. Then he fled in terror after the retreating convoy, pursued in his imagination by the dead man. From time to time he clutched at his pocket as he ran to assure himself that the roll of notes was still there, and that his victim's malignant spirit had not wrested it from him in his flight.

That night, when the officer commanding the convoy made up his returns, the name of Yuri Belaieff of Jelgava was added to the list of casualties which had befallen the gang of prisoners; and against the entry was a note—"Died on the road."

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The sun, which shines impartially on the just and the unjust, looked down between the trees of the forest on the narrow path where lay the body of Yuri von Belaieff. The procession of pain and misery, of which an hour before he had formed a unit, had passed on four versts towards its dreary destination, leaving only the trodden snow to bear witness to its passage, and the rigid form of the man in the grey convict's coat lying across the path. The sun and silence watched over him, and the winter frost held him in its arms.

Through the forest a man came, singing blithely. There was freedom in his long, swinging stride, and fearless happiness in his eyes. Thought had set her marks upon his puckered brow, and seamed his face with wrinkles; but she had left no trace of disquietude, only a serene dignity. It was a remarkable face—wise, strong, fearless, and withal engagingly frank. His whole bearing and movements were those of a young man in the confidence of his strength; but the face bespoke wisdom beyond his years.

A bend in the path brought him suddenly upon the prostrate body of Yuri Belaieff. The song died upon his lips, and an expression of pain came into his eyes.

"What, another?" he exclaimed, bending over the grey-coated form. Then he went down on his knees in the snow, and loosening the collar of Yuri's shirt, began to make a hasty examination.

"Dead or alive," he muttered, rising to his feet, "I shall not leave you here, my friend."

He lifted Yuri in his arms with ease, and bore him

off through the forest. Turning out of the main pathway, he struck a track through the trees, and in a few minutes arrived at the door of the log cabin which was his home.

He laid Yuri upon the rough bed in the corner, and going out again into the little enclosure which surrounded the house, he opened the door of a shed, which served him as a workshop, and selected a long, thin file from the row of tools in the rack against the wall. Then he returned to Yuri, and in a few minutes the fetters fell from his wrists and ankles. Very deftly he removed the long grey coat and other garments, and once more made a quick examination of the body. He was evidently not satisfied that he was dead; for he went to a medicine chest, and mixing a draught, forced it between the clenched teeth. Then he lit the end of a reel of ribbon, and held the smouldering substance to Yuri's nostrils. A pungent odour filled the hut as the thin column of smoke curled up into the air and gradually dispersed in a filmy cloud near the wooden beams of the ceiling. In half-an-hour there was a flutter of the eyelids, then they closed over the glassy eyes. And then a deep, painful breath escaped from the yellow lips. All the time Marc Loginoff was watching the symptoms carefully, his head resting on his right hand, and the deep lines of his face intensified by his thoughts. Presently the struggling breathing ceased and the eyes opened again. The glassy stare had gone from them; life was returning.

"So, friend," Marc Loginoff exclaimed contentedly, "you will come back, after all, and try life again. To judge from the cut and colour of your

coat you have tasted of its bitterness to the full, and yet you are fighting hard to return. Well, you can begin over again here. May you find it sweeter this time!"

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### "THE TRUE BEGINNING."

THE story of Marc Loginoff has been the story of thousands of earnest thinkers who have had the courage of their convictions in Russia. Marc came of a good commercial family in Moscow, where he was educated as a chemist. When he left the University he studied for several years in Germany and England, and finally returned to his native land, having acquired a view of life and its responsibilities which was sadly out of fashion with the governing classes in Russia. Had he kept his views to himself, all would have been well; but it was no part of his philosophy to keep the good things of this world to himself. The whole brotherhood of man was entitled to share in his philosophy for what it was worth. It was not likely ever to become very popular, because it advocated the suppression of self and infinite charity to all God's creatures. Nevertheless he was so rash as to deliver lectures and, worse still, to write books about it. Thereby he gained fame; but incurred the displeasure of the authorities, and he was warned as to his future conduct, and more especially against the folly of writing books without the permission of the

Censor. But unfortunately Marc's philosophy recognised no authorities over the mind of man; and he continued to study and to acquire knowledge derived from all the greatest thinkers that the world has known, and to write down the results of his researches for those who ran counter to the authorities to read. More especially did he insist on the wide gap which separated the doctrines of the Orthodox Church from the teachings of Christ, and compare the simple lives of the Pagan Stoics with the tawdry magnificence of the princes of the Holy Church in Russia. So he was excommunicated, and sent to Kansk, in Siberia.

Up to this point the career of Marc Loginoff did not differ materially from the lives of many other thinkers in Russia. The same experiences, and the same fate were shared by all alike who dared to hold opinions of their own, and to give expression to them. The strange developments of his case were reserved for his period of exile. After five years of durance he was permitted to settle in the country; and he built for himself a little log hut, and enclosed a few acres of land which he cultivated as a farm. He sent for his books from Moscow, and laid in a store of chemicals and the appliances of his craft. He needed no more for his happiness, and he was content.

His next neighbour, who lived three versts away in the forest, was an old Sabbatarian—one of that curious sect who, clinging to the doctrines of the Old Testament, claim to be Jews, but reject many of the tenets of the orthodox Israelites. The old Sabbatarian's house was full of strange-looking volumes, and Marc Loginoff's curiosity was aroused by them. Soon he found himself immersed in the study of the

Talmud, with the old Sabbatarian as his instructor. He was an apt pupil, and the sacred books of the Law and their commentaries engrossed him. He began to wonder what there could be under the sun which these books did not teach. And the old Sabbatarian produced the Cabbala.

Now the Cabbala forms no part of the essential law of the Jews. It is a book of mystery, which it is given to a very few to understand. There are things within its pages which only the initiated can comprehend, and the average intellect staggers beneath the intricacies of its doctrines. But to those who can read it with a clear understanding, it contains the solution of mysteries which are still inexplicable to the men of science of our day. There are certain fixed laws which govern the lines of scientific research. They are known, and inviolable. The law of gravitation is one; the theory of evolution would seem to be another. These are laws from which there is no appeal—they must be accepted as axioms of the progress of human knowledge. Nothing which transgresses them is possible. In their light, miracles fall to conjuring tricks, ancient history to legends. But they constitute only the fringe of science. How many forces and laws remain as yet undiscovered? Who can deny hypnotism, which is tabooed by medical professors because they cannot understand the laws which govern it? Who can doubt the evidences of spiritualism, which the Churches and science reject for the same reason? The fakir of the East, by the subjection of the body, can emancipate his spirit from the flesh. These are facts which violate no discovered laws; but which are still outside the ken of science.

Egypt, Assyria, India, in the days of man's infancy, have known of these things, as we know them now. There has been no advance of knowledge, because no laws have been discovered to guide us in our researches. A few centuries ago those who meddled with such things were burned at the stake. Now they are charitably regarded as harmless faddists. But they are facts, and have been facts since the beginning of things.

So Marc Loginoff studied the Cabbala, and continued to write books which were earning for him a world-wide fame—but that was all that he made from them; for he accepted no payment for his work, and any publisher who pleased might bring out editions of his books. In manner of living he followed the teachings of the Stoics. He would have nothing to do with money, which he would neither accept nor give in exchange. If he needed ink and paper he would give a measure of corn for them. When his only coat became threadbare he exchanged a sheep for material for a new one, which he made for himself. Among his books were several on nature and agriculture. He regarded farming as the highest calling to which man can attain. Let a man get what is necessary for his being from the earth which God has given him for the purpose, and his independence is assured. He need fear no man, for he is beholden to none. He need envy no man, for he has all that he requires. He is a king whose subjects are the seasons and the elements, and who owes allegiance to none save God; but love to all. Such was the teaching of Marc Loginoff; and he practised it himself to the letter.

When he had been in exile for ten years, an offer was made to him to return to Russia, on condition that he wrote no more against the Church and the Holy Synod. But Marc Loginoff answered, that if he were to return to Moscow, it would only be for the Tsar to banish him again, and that he preferred to remain in Siberia. Therefore he stayed in his place of exile and became famous throughout the world for his wisdom and learning, and was beloved of those who lived round about him for his acts of kindness and sympathy.

* * * * * *

Yuri Belaieff's convalescence was rapid under the care of Marc Loginoff, who nursed him tenderly and skilfully. For some weeks there were no explanations between them. It was enough for Marc that he had found a fellow-man fallen by the wayside; he did not trouble to speculate on the causes which had brought him to the verge of death in chains and the sombre grey coat of a convict. As for Yuri, it seemed as though he were beginning life afresh. Jelgava, his parents, Zolotnikoff, Anna Paskevitch and even Miriam herself were as the vague shadows of a dream. He looked upon them and his sufferings with a feeling of unreality. He was very weak and he leant on Marc Loginoff bodily and mentally, as a child leans upon its parents, with absolute confidence. And so the days passed, with no word of interrogation spoken between them. They were two men out of all the world thrown together by fate in the waste places. Their pasts shrouded by the clouds on the horizon, their futures beyond the limits of their care. They

were living in the present, and Yuri, at least, thought of nothing beyond it.

But a day came when Yuri's strength was returning, when he looked up into the face of his benefactor, who was leaning over him, and asked abruptly:

"Who are you?"

Marc smiled at him good-naturedly.

"My name is Marc Loginoff—if that conveys anything to you."

Yuri raised himself on his elbow.

"Marc Loginoff!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Marc Loginoff, the philosopher?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Ah!"

"Then you have heard of me?"

"Yes—I have done more—I have read you."

And then silence fell between them. A new hope was awakening in Yuri's breast. What good fortune had sent this man of all others to his rescue. If there were a man in the world who could solve the riddle which had exercised his mind since first he began to taste of the bitterness of life, surely Marc Loginoff was that one. He would tell him all, keeping nothing back. Perhaps he would he able to explain the meaning of it. And so he unbosomed himself to his preserver, telling him the story of his life, of his hopes, of his ambitions and even of his love.

The past surged back upon him as he recounted his story. The dream figures became real once more. The bitterness of disillusionment, the injustice of it all, the hopelessness of his love, reminded him forcibly that he was still in the world. With the awakening of his senses the longing for the strenuous life

returned to him, and he realised that he was prepared to go back to it and fight again the battle which had brought him nothing but misery and despair.

Marc, looking down at him as he lay in the bright sunshine which glistened on the snow before the door of the little cabin, read his companion's mind like an open book.

"You want to go back to it?" he said. "But is it worth while?"

"I can do nothing here," Yuri answered. "I am not like you. I cannot make myself heard from the wilderness. I must be in the fight, striking good blows for the right, suffering with the others, being repulsed, it may be, with them. It is too far off here. I cannot realise it."

Marc laughed quietly.

"If you only knew it," he said, "a man may strike better blows for liberty and justice from the seclusion of the wilderness than in the thick of the fight. Stay with me here for a while, and I will convince you."

"But my mother—and Miriam?" Yuri protested.

"You are dead," said Marc. "The officer in command of the *rota* has said so. And since you are officially dead, why trouble about a resurrection? You cannot return to your home, for you would be arrested again. You cannot marry this Miriam whom you love, because she is a Jewess. There is nothing to be gained by returning."

"But they must know that I am alive. They will be grieving for me."

"Two months ago they heard of your death," said Marc. "By this time the first anguish of their grief is over. Your silence now can cause them no further

pain. You cannot go back to them; your separation from them is as effectual as if you were dead. Surely they would rather believe you dead than a fugitive on the face of the earth."

"But what good shall I do here?" Yuri objected. "I cannot even continue my studies of medicine. I should only be a hindrance to you."

"Perhaps I shall be able to teach you something if you stay."

"But I have nothing with which to pay for my education, since I fell among thieves by the wayside."

"I want none of your money," Marc exclaimed, with a gesture of dissent. "I have no use for it here. Nevertheless it may interest you to know that the thief did not take the shirt off your back. I have it safely inside, and the bank notes which were sewn in the hem are still there. They are quite useless to you so long as you are here, for the Tsar's currency is not accepted by me. But if, when you are tired of my company, you wish to go to other countries you have the wherewithal to travel whither you please."

"It was the money which my mother sent me in prison," said Yuri thoughtfully. "I had forgotten it."

Marc looked at him wistfully, wondering what effect the knowledge would have upon him. Would he take his money and go back to the world? Or would he choose the better part and stay?

"Well?" he said at last.

Yuri looked up into his face with quiet confidence.

"I will stay with you here," he answered, "if you will teach me."

"Up to a certain point I can teach you," Marc answered, laying his hand on Yuri's shoulder. "But

there are things which cannot be learnt here in the desert. In order that we may know what we owe to mankind, it is necessary to live among our fellows. There are men in far countries who are wiser than I —to them you must go, if you would learn."

"I stand on the threshold," said Yuri humbly, "and I look to you for guidance."

"Then enter—and when I have taught you the plan of the house, you must go within and see for yourself how the whole structure is built up, rising from the solid foundations of love and duty."

"Whither must I go?"

"Stay here for a while," said Marc, "then I will send you to one who will show you the inner house. It is a far cry from Siberia to Lisbon—but it is worth the journey to acquire knowledge."

"Then you will send me to the ends of the earth—beyond the gates of the world?"

"Yes, my friend," said Marc. "For beyond the gates lies the beginning of wisdom."

# EPILOGUE.

## CHAPTER I.

### ST. THEODOSIUS.

TEN years afterwards. The Duchy of Courland has been completely Russified. The liberties and privileges which she enjoyed have lost their significance, for the Grand Duke of Courland is also the Tsar of Russia, and free institutions do not flourish under the heel of autocracy. The changes which began with the appointment of Alexis Zolotnikoff to the See of Courland have been carried through to their logical conclusion, in spite of the overthrow of the great bishop. The members of the Orthodox Greek Church have increased and multiplied. The professors at the Gymnasium are no longer drawn from the ranks of learned men irrespective of race or creed, but are the nominees of the Synod—all true Russians and ignorant. There had been trouble amongst the students when their old professors were dismissed and men appointed in their places, many of whom knew less than the boys whom they were

sent to instruct. But the indignation of the students had been suppressed by the usual means and order restored. The "Ecce Signum" had been declared to be at the bottom of the disturbance, and an order had been sent from St. Petersburg that it was to be closed. Thereby the "Ecce Signum" gained enormously in prestige and importance in Jelgava. Instead of being a harmless boys' club it rose to the importance of a secret society, and bred a race of valiant intriguers against the authority of the Tsar. All semblance of independence had been crushed out of Courland, and she had sunk to the level of any other government of Russia.

The Midsummer Fair was in full swing in Jelgava. The long lines of booths with their miscellaneous collections of articles filled the market-place. The pedlars of holy and historic relics shouted the excellence of their wares. The circus, the marionettes, the singers with their *balolaicas* and concertinas, the beggars with their hideous deformities of trunk and limb, all were in their accustomed places and catered for the public taste, each in his special line. Several caravans of gipsies occupied a corner of the square with droves of sorry-looking horses which they had brought for sale. These folk were merchants of great independence and antiquity, and honourable in their dealings so long as it advantaged them to be so. They had paid their market tax like the rest, and were free of the fair to buy or to sell as it suited their fancy.

Down the long avenue of booths, which formed the principal street of the fair, a company of men and women, headed by a blatant brass band, marched

in procession with banners and flags. In the middle of the market-place they halted and arranged themselves in a circle. The band ceased playing, and one of the company, standing in the midst, exhorted the godless buyers and sellers to repentance. A crowd quickly gathered round them and listened with curiosity to the words of the preacher, who, like every other apostle of a creed, claimed to have found the only true way of salvation, and bewailed the awful fate which awaited all who rejected his doctrines. The good people of Jelgava knew of many different religions, from Orthodox Greek to Skopsi and Jew, and they had lately been taught that only the Orthodox can expect salvation in this world, whatever they might look for in the next. The pressure which had been brought to bear had awakened in them a spirit of religious revival and revolt against the intolerance of the Greek Church. They were prepared to listen to any fanatic who preached a new religion, and the emotional discourse of the uniformed preacher, with his brass band and chorus of blue-bonneted women, appealed to the popular religious hysteria.

"What are they?"

The question passed from mouth to mouth, until someone volunteered the information that they came from the Black Sea.

"But they are not fishes!" another suggested.

"No, but I expect they can drink like fishes," a wag retorted. And so the Black Sea theory was discarded; and a man in the crowd, who was better informed than his neighbours, condescended to explain, that it was a new religion which had been manufactured in England and which had nothing to

do with the religion of Father John of Kronstadt, and, consequently, that it was no good. The announcement was followed by a heated discussion on the saintly qualities of Father John; there were those who declared he was a worker of miracles, whilst others maintained that he was an imposter. And all the time the new preacher in his peaked cap and blue uniform was haranguing the crowd, assisted at intervals by the brass band and choir. But when, at the end of his discourse, the ranks of the little army were closed up and the tambourine was passed round for contributions, the crowd gradually melted away.

The following day there was a fresh attraction for the throng of people who congregated in the market-place of Jelgava. The old man, bent almost double, with long, unkempt, grey beard and hair reaching below his shoulders, who proclaimed, in a sonorous and impressive voice, that he was St. Theodosius, and that he had lately arrived from Mount Carmel, was a strange contrast to the spruce Salvationist preacher with his noisy following; and he made a stronger appeal to the religious emotions of the Courlanders. The simple folk saw in his rags and dishevelled appearance the true signs of the prophet crying in the wilderness, and they stood beneath the steps of the Opera House, on which he had stationed himself, and listened to him reverently. He told them how he had been conducted by St. Paul to the nethermost Hell, where he had beheld the tortures of the wicked. Thence the Apostle had carried him to the abodes of the blessed, where he had spoken with the angel Gabriel. Then he had

been sent back to Earth to tell the inhabitants to repent, for the end of the world was at hand. The great catastrophe would overtake the universe when the moon was new for the second time, and woe to the wicked when the great day came! There were yet six weeks of grace. Let all men, therefore, prepare themselves and quit their evil ways.

As the old man delivered his warning, his eyes, flaming in their deep sockets, seemed to pierce the very souls of his hearers. They stood before him spell-bound, as though they were mesmerised by his penetrating glance. Then, suddenly, a man in the crowd threw up his hands with a loud cry and fell to the ground in a fit. Another rushed down the crowded avenues of booths shouting, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Lord, have mercy upon us!" Others threw themselves on the steps of the Opera House, and implored the saint to intercede for them. The message of St. Theodosius spread rapidly through the fair, and the people flocked towards the Opera House where the old man stood crying, "Repent! Repent!" A scene of indescribable confusion ensued. Thousands fled to the churches to make their peace with God. The keepers of the stalls left their wares and ran towards the Opera House. Many went home to communicate to their families the news of the impending dissolution.

A great wave of superstitious hysteria swept over Jelgava, and the daily routine of life was paralysed. The business of the fair came to a stand-still, for it was manifestly absurd to provide for a future which would never be. Time was precious for those who had sins upon their consciences. Open confession

in the streets of the town was resorted to by many in the hope of obtaining forgiveness; and the public acknowledgment of wrongs was followed by the restitution of stolen property and the payment of forgotten debts. The humble moujiks prostrated themselves before St. Theodosius, beating their heads on the pavement and worshipping him as he shuffled through the streets of the city with his eternal cry, "Repent!"

The fame of the saint spread from Jelgava to Oolai, Bausk, Talsen, Pilsen, and all the surrounding country, and drew thousands to the Capital to hear and see the risen St. Theodosius. As the days went by and the end approached, so great was the number of people who came in from far and near that the town could not contain them. It was then that St. Theodosius went out into the Langerwaldt, a stretch of forest about five versts from the city, followed by a huge concourse of people. They formed a vast bivouac in the forest—an army awaiting the summons of the last trump. The farmers from all sides brought their cattle and crops to feed the multitude, selling off all their stock at nominal prices, and joining the ranks of the saint's followers.

The days passed in the forest in lamentations and prayer until the fatal day dawned. The sun rose upon the doomed Earth in cloudless splendour; the birds twittered in the trees careless of the impending catastrophe. Nature with perfect confidence in the immutable beneficence of its Creator smiled almost pitifully at the fearful concourse of men and women in the Langerwaldt, who sought to ward off the wrath of an arbitrary God by fasting and lamentation.

Mid-day came and went, but no sign was vouchsafed to the expectant watchers in the forest. Evening closed in upon them; the stars appeared in their appointed places, and the thin crescent of the new moon sank below the Western horizon. A spirit of scepticism began to take hold of some of the saint's disciples. Their doubts of the infallibility of St. Theodosius increased as the evening wore on to night, and they communicated them to others. A deputation was appointed to wait on the saint, who had retired apart for prayer and meditation, to enquire the cause of the long delay. They found St. Theodosius prostrate on the ground. He was in a profound slumber, and beside him was an empty bottle which once had contained vodka.

As the deputation returned to the people, supporting the drunken saint on either side, the great bell of the Cathedral in Jelgava tolled the hour of midnight. The multitude in the Langewaldt had been straining their ears for the last half-hour to catch the signal of deliverance, and as the deep vibrations were borne to them on the night wind, they arose with a mighty shout of joy. The Day of Wrath was over.

## CHAPTER II.

### AT THE LITTLE GREEN HOUSE.

FATHER NIKON smoked his cigarette in peace in the kitchen of the little green house. The times were prosperous for the Greek Church in Jelgava, and Father Nikon shared in their prosperity. His salary had been increased, and the number of his congregation had multiplied since the old days when all religions stood on an equal footing in Courland. The fees for visiting the sick, for burying the dead, for joining in the bonds of marriage and for receiving into the Church of Christ had risen to a considerable yearly sum. The bishop who had succeeded to the See, after the disappearance of the great Zolotnikoff, had carried out the policy of his predecessor to the letter. Jews, Protestants and Roman Catholics were suppressed, and the true religion of the Orthodox Church was placed within the reach of all, with a solemn warning that it was advisable not to reject the means of salvation which the Holy Synod provided for all men.

Anna Paskevitch, in the little scullery which opened off the kitchen, was busy with the plates and dishes,

and as she washed them and put them into the rack to dry she hummed an old Lettish folk-song. Time had been kind to Anna; her face showed but few signs of the ten years of work which had elapsed. The wavy hair above her forehead was touched with grey; but her eyes were as alert as ever, she had lost none of her strenuous activity, and her tongue was still ready to denounce the evil-doer and hypocrite. Her children were now both at school; but the time gained by their absence during the day Anna gave ungrudgingly to help Miriam Serkovski in the management of her children's home.

The relationship between husband and wife was in no way changed. Anna kept her husband in order with the same impulsive affection that she had always displayed towards him. Nikon was as submissively obedient as of old. But as he sat over his newspaper in the kitchen there were misgivings in his mind. He had valiantly maintained the efficacy of the preaching of St. Theodosius. In his superstitious soul he had been firmly persuaded that the Day of Judgment was at hand, and it was only his duties as priest in Jelgava and the fear of Anna, that had prevented him from following the saint into the Langerwaldt. He had scarcely dared even to mention to Anna his belief in the new prophet, for she had scoffed openly at his pretensions, as she had scoffed at all holy men since she had first met him. He had spent the day before in indescribable anxiety, for, in spite of his faith, he could not be conscientiously certain that the popes of the Orthodox Church would be rated at their proper valuation in the confusion which would follow the sound of the

Last Trump. But to-day his apprehensions on that score were removed. In the paper which he held in his hand there was a full account of the downfall of St. Theodosius and of the bursting of the bubble of credulity which had attained to such a gigantic size in Jelgava. His anxiety regarding the future had given place to a feeling of uneasiness as to the effect which the news would produce upon Anna.

The return of the children from school precipitated the crisis. They rushed into the house full of the news at which all Jelgava was now laughing heartily, since the danger was past. With breathless excitement they told how all the people were streaming into the town from the Langerwaldt, and how St. Theodosius had fled before them, pursued by execrations and pelted with stones and mud. A nickname had already been found for him, and the more good-natured among the crowd were laughing at the prodigious deception which "St. Dossie" had practised upon them.

Father Nikon at once began to discourse on the folly of giving heed to false prophets, declaring that the only road to salvation was by the doctrines of the Orthodox Church. Anna was merciful—she even forbore indulging in the luxury of, "I told you so." She knew by years of experience that it was useless to ridicule Nikon about his superstitions, and she allowed the incident to pass without comment.

The arrival of Miriam Serkovski created a diversion, and the conversation turned into other channels. At the age of seven and twenty Miriam was more beautiful than she had been at seventeen. The years of sadness following on the death of her father and

the loss of her lover had deepened the sweetness of her expression and added pathos. In all other respects she was the same Miriam who had managed capably the household of Jacov Serkovski, and whose presence had charmed all with whom she came in contact.

She had come to see Anna on business connected with her children's home, and, in order that they might be alone, the wife of the priest took her out into the garden. But Anna made no offer to seek the seclusion of the old powder magazine; that retreat had never been used since the day when Anna had conducted the mad bishop from it. Miriam had often wondered why she had abandoned the old building; but to all her enquiries on the subject Anna always found some inadequate excuse in answer. She regarded the events which had taken place behind its solid walls as among the acts which we perform just too late. Had she only had the courage to act sooner—only a few months sooner—how different things might have been! Jacov Serkovski and Daniel Herz might yet have been alive, and Yuri Belaieff who had perished in the wilds of Siberia. Alexander von Belaieff and his wife might still have occupied the house of the Politzmaister in Jelgava; but the Politzmaister had died eight years ago, and his wife of a broken heart within a few weeks of the news of her son's death. The woman who stood by her side might have been the mother of a family; but, instead, she was a reproach amongst all her own people in Jelgava for that she was unmarried. Anna knew that it was useless to waste vain regrets over those who were dead; but she felt that

deliverance from the disgrace of spinster-hood was still possible for Miriam, and she never lost an opportunity of impressing upon her the necessity of marriage.

"Is it to be for ever other people's children?" she demanded irritably, when Miriam had unfolded to her some scheme for the benefit of her charges. "Will you never be getting married and bringing up children of your own?"

Miriam smiled sadly.

"How importunate you are, Anna, dear. Why will not you allow me to remain unmarried?"

"There are dozens of reasons," said Anna, "and I have told you them over and over again; and they do not include the reasons which your Rabbi and your people can give you."

"But my reasons against marrying are even more powerful," Miriam answered. "I only wish they would leave me alone!"

Miriam's protest was not without cause. She had been pestered by men of all creeds and conditions to relinquish her freedom. The Rabbi had brought his influence to bear, pointing out the iniquity of refusing to enter the holy bond. "Shadchens" from every quarter of Russia had flocked to Jelgava to seek an alliance for their patrons with the richest woman in Jewry. This one had a rising young Rabbi to offer; another urged the claims of a prosperous Jewish merchant. They all joined the Rabbi in condemning her attitude of non-compliance with the law of Israel. But it was not only her own people—members of the Russian aristocracy had sought her hand. Some of them had gone so far as to declare that they would

renounce the Orthodox faith cheerfully if she would consent to their conversion as the price of her hand and fortune. But Miriam had repelled them all. The memory of Yuri Belaieff was sacred to her. Anna Paskevitch was the only being who knew Miriam's secret. Old General Bulvanoff and his wife both suspected the truth; but Miriam had never confided her love story to either of them.

The old soldier had stood by her loyally after the calamity which had befallen the house of Serkovski. He had seen that justice was done with regard to her father's property; and when the law was passed that Jews were not to be allowed to hold real estate in Russia, and hundreds of rich Jews were ruined, being compelled to sell their lands forthwith, General Bulvanoff bought all the Serkovski property in Jelgava at its full value, and allowed Miriam to manage it as if it still belonged to her.

That Miriam should still cling to the memory of her first love was inexplicable to Anna Paskevitch. Her philosophy of love and marriage recognised no such impracticable fidelity. She had married Nikon without any fantastic illusions of spiritual love, and she was happy with him. Nikon, too, was happy, and so were their children. If she had not married Nikon she would doubtless have married another, and have been equally happy. Why could not Miriam do the same? It was absurd and wicked to fret for ever for one who, under no circumstances, could have married her! But all her arguments were thrown away upon Miriam, who rarely mentioned the name of Yuri; but from whose mind the thought of him was never absent. Since the day when the news of his death

had reached her, Miriam had become more reticent in her conversation with Anna about him. Gradually she ceased altogether to refer to him. Then Yuri's mother died, and Miriam was silent. But Anna knew that every week Miriam went quietly to the churchyard and stood by the grave of the Baroness; and sometimes she would lay flowers upon it.

But in spite of Miriam's attitude of uncompromising objection to the married state both Anna and Fräulein Erard, who remained faithfully with her former pupil and assisted her in the management of her home, pinned their faith on one man to bring her to a reasonable frame of mind. That man was Antacolski, the great violinist. He had never wavered in his allegiance to Miriam. Though fame and wealth awaited him to whichever quarter of the globe he turned, he always came back to his native place in Vilna, and thence journeyed to Jelgava to pay his addresses to the beautiful Rose of Sharon. But the answer was always the same. And when the news of his departure for Berlin or Paris became known, Anna and Fräulein Erard were thrown into the depths of despair, for they realised that once more their hopes were doomed to disappointment.

## CHAPTER III.

### "CHOLENT AND KUGGEL."

THE downfall of St. Theodosius was as complete as it had been dramatic. The crazy prophet having once given way to vodka, remained in a state of chronic inebriety until he had spent all the money which he had collected during the few weeks of his popularity. The wretched, irresponsible creature wandered about the streets of Jelgava, a laughing-stock to *moujiks* and children, who followed him about with cries of derision, saying that he was an imposter and *brajaga* (tramp), and calling upon "St. Dossie" to bless them. Sometimes the old man would turn upon his tormenters, and they recoiled before the scorn of his piercing eyes. There was a dignity about him on these occasions which contrasted strangely with the helpless imbecility of his drunken moods. When all his money was spent, and he sat huddled up on the steps of the Opera House where he had first proclaimed his Mission, half-famished and in misery, some of the *moujiks* who had tormented him brought him food and water, and thus from day to day he wandered through the streets, unheeded by the *gorodovoys* and respectable members of the com-

munity, but befriended by the poor who had persecuted him a short time before.

By chance he drifted into the Jewish quarter of the town; and there he found employment which enabled him to live. On Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, it is forbidden to cook food or even to light a fire for the preparation of a meal. The custom amongst the Jews is to prepare their meals for the Sabbath on Friday; and in order that they may have a hot meal in the middle of the day, the good housewife sends to the bake-house on Friday evening a large pot, covered over with a piece of muslin, which contains the ingredients of a "hot-pot"—meat and vegetables. Within the large pot, which is called "cholent," a smaller one is placed which contains the macaroni or pudding, and this vessel is called the "kuggel." The baker stows all the cholents into his oven, and about sundown on Friday the fire is lighted and the oven door closed. It is not opened again until noon on the Sabbath, when the Jews are leaving the Synagogue. Cholent and kuggel are by that time fully cooked; but the Law forbids that they should be carried from the bakehouse to the homes of their owners. The difficulty is overcome by employing Christians to carry the steaming cholents home, and the *moujiks*, who are aware of this custom, crowd round the bakehouse door, and for a piece of "challi" (white bread) carry them to the houses of the Jews.

When "St. Dossie" took up his quarters amongst the Jews of Jelgava he became the official cholent carrier to the district. The Jews, who always have a fellow-feeling for the helpless and down-trodden, preferred to employ him to the able-bodied *moujiks* who

clamoured for their white bread; and therefore, "St. Dossie" was busily engaged for an hour or two on the Sabbath carrying their dinners home for the Jews, and in return they fed him throughout the week. The monopoly which the saint had thus established raised the wrath of the *moujiks* who hungered for "challi," which they never tasted except from the hands of the Jewish housewife, and they swore to be avenged on the crazy saint who had literally taken the bread out of their mouths.

"St. Dossie" became a great favourite in the Jewish quarter. His crazy ways soon ceased to rouse the curiosity of the children, and they no longer molested him. Like Kotke Trubman his name became a by-word in Jelgava—"as crazy as 'St. Dossie.'" Nevertheless he found a safe haven amongst the Jews, and all would have been well with him if he had remained in their quarter of the town. But one day he ventured beyond the limits of the Jewish quarter and fell among a band of *moujiks*, who were not slow to recognise the man who had deprived them of their challi, and who had led them out on a fruitless mission to the Langerwaldt. They began pelting him with stones, and when the unhappy saint fled from them with tottering steps, they gave chase and hunted him through the streets. "St. Dossie" ran as fast as his bent figure and weak knees would allow him; but the *moujiks* were soon upon him, raining blows with their fists on his grey head and rounded shoulders. "St. Dossie" stumbled into Marien Street pursued by the infuriated mob. He fell in the roadway opposite to the house of Miriam Serkovski, and a man with a scythe in his hand elbowed his way to the

front of the crowd, swearing he would kill him for taking the bread out of the mouths of his children.

The uproar in the street attracted the attention of Miriam, and seeing the cause of it, she ran out to the rescue of the fallen saint. Just as the *moujik* with the scythe raised his weapon to act the part of Father Time to his victim, Miriam interposed between "St. "Dossie" and his assailants. The scythe remained poised in the air for a moment, then it was lowered tamely. The *moujiks* stood looking in open-mouthed astonishment at the beautiful woman who had suddenly appeared like a guardian angel over the prostrate form of the crazy saint. Then they drew off sulkily, and Miriam cried after them:

"Shame on you! Would you attack a helpless old man?"

The *moujiks* slunk away, leaving Miriam and "St. Dossie" alone in the middle of the street. The old man was trembling from head to foot, his hands were cut by the fall, and his face was bleeding. Miriam stooped down and assisted him to his feet, and as she did so Anna Paskevitch came out of the gate into the street.

"What have you got there, child?" she asked, going up to Miriam, who was supporting "St. Dossie" with her arm.

"It is a poor old man. They were beating him. We must bring him into the house, Anna."

Anna leaned forward, and laying a hand on "St. Dossie's" shoulder gazed intently into his face.

"No, no, child!" she exclaimed roughly. "Leave him here. You must not bring him in."

"The stupid *moujiks* were trying to kill him. We

cannot leave him here. He must come in and we will take care of him."

"Leave him alone, I say," Anna cried, dragging Miriam's arm away from the old man's shoulder. "You shall not bring him in. You don't know what you are doing!"

There was a fierce light in Anna's eyes which was new to Miriam. She dragged her away from "St. Dossie," and the helpless creature fell with a groan.

"Oh, Anna! How can you be so cruel?"

"It is a pity that they did not kill him!" Anna exclaimed savagely. "Come away!"

But Miriam freed herself, and once more bent down over the fallen man.

"How unkind you are!" she said. "Of course I shall take him in—and you must help me."

But when she looked up, Anna was hurrying away, wringing her hands; and though she called to her she would not come back. Miriam could not understand it; but she was determined that the old man should be brought into her house and cared for. So in the end "St. Dossie" was taken in by Miriam Serkovski, and the old Jewish gardener was told to look after him, and he was given a room in his house.

Anna Paskevitch hurried home in a state of great perturbation. It was ten years since she had left Alexis Zolotnikoff on the steps of the lunatic asylum, and she had never seen him since, nor had she enquired of his fate. She had thrust him from her mind as far as possible, and it was only when Miriam spoke to her of the past that she ever thought of him. She preferred not to analyse her feelings with regard to her responsibility for his madness. If she were

to blame, at least she had acted in the interests of others, and it was useless to worry herself about it. She believed him to be still in the lunatic asylum whither she had conducted him, unless he were dead. The lapse of time had eased her conscience, and she ceased to reproach herself with regard to him, only regretting sometimes that she had not acted more promptly. The whole incident was passing into the region of the "might-have-been"—a vague shadow-land on which we look back with regrets tempered with complacency. But to-day when she looked into the face of the destitute wretch whom Miriam had rescued from his persecutors, the remembrance of the incidents of ten years ago had come back to her with startling reality.

"Oh, if I could only tell her!" she cried. "But she will take him into her house not knowing who he is. To think that she should befriend him! Though he is mad and helpless now I cannot bear to think of it. What can I do? Oh God, what am I to do?"

It was seldom that Anna Paskevitch invoked the Deity, but when she did so it always came straight from her heart. Perhaps the heretic had a greater veneration for the Ruler of the Universe than many who make a living by representing Him as a God of vengeance and fear, and, from lack of familiarity, treated Him with less contempt. But whatever interpretation was to be placed upon her appeal to Divine guidance, there was no doubt that Anna was faced with a problem which caused her intense anxiety of mind; and the very idea that Miriam should give shelter to the man who was responsible for the murder of her father, and who had endeavoured to encompass

her ruin, was revolting to her. And yet there was nothing that she could do to prevent it.

The story of Zolotnikoff's life since the day when Anna released him from captivity in the old powder magazine, and led him to the door of the lunatic asylum, had resembled closely the lives of many other harmless lunatics in Russia. For a time he had been detained in the asylum; but when it was discovered that he was incurable, and that his mania was not homicidal, he was set at liberty. The authorities at the asylum had no clue to his identity, and he could give no satisfactory account of himself. From his emaciated appearance when he entered, and from the fact that no passport was found upon him, it was judged that he must be a tramp. Accordingly he was turned out with a permit to beg for a living. If he were unable to beg, he might starve for all that they cared.

So he wandered out into the streets aimlessly. The noise and bustle of the town frightened him, and he hurried along, keeping close to the walls of the houses, until he arrived at the river. On the wharf he fell in with some good-natured *strugovtchiks* who gave him a share of their black bread and *kapousta*, and allowed him to sleep in the cabin of the barge which they were taking down the river. The next day they were to continue their journey, and they tried to make Zolotnikoff understand that he must leave them. But the poor creature implored them not to go without him, and they took him with them to Doubletown. Thereafter he wandered about the villages on the sea-board of Courland, begging food and shelter, telling the villagers that he had risen

from the dead before the appointed day. Sometimes he would describe to an awe-struck company of fisher-folk how his soul had lived in the grave with his decaying body for a thousand years, and how, at last, the Holy Mother had summoned him back to earth.

As the years went by, the risen saint became familiar to the inhabitants of the low-lying Courlandish villages, who regarded him with superstitious reverence. Gradually his fame spread into the interior. It was reported that he was St. Theodosius who had returned to earth, and the crazy bishop was easily persuaded that the report was true. He went from village to village, gaining in popularity and influence as he passed on his journey back towards Jelgava. Then came the height of his fame in the Langerwaldt, and his downfall.

Throughout all his wanderings, not a soul had recognised in the decrepit old man, with his flowing hair and beard, the former Bishop of Courland. There was only one person in the world who was likely to know him—that was Anna Paskevitch. Chance had brought them face to face once more, and at a glance Anna knew that the past, which she had regarded as dead, had come to life again with the resurrection of St. Theodosius.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MIRIAM IS FIRM.

MIRIAM SERKOVSKI sat in her private sitting-room with Fräulein Erard, who bent intently over her knitting needles, and pretended to be entirely unconscious of the presence of the third person in the room. Miriam's face bore an expression of respectful impatience as she listened to the sing-song discourse of the elderly gentleman in the long garments with corkscrew curls above his ears who, with raised elbows and open palms, expostulated vehemently with her.

"All the way from Odessa, my daughter—all the way from Odessa have I come to make you this offer. Reb Samuel is a paragon in Israel—he is a Talmudist, he is of a good countenance, and, ach! he is very rich. His business is worth two hundred thousand roubles. Think of that! Two hundred thousand roubles!"

The shaggy eyebrows almost disappeared into his hair as he made the statement of his client's worth, and he brought his two hands down on his knees with an emphatic slap. But even the pecuniary advantages of an alliance with Reb Samuel failed to rouse Miriam from her attitude of polite boredom.

"It makes no difference, Reb Mosche," she answered. "I shall never marry."

The shadchen, who saw a fat commission vanishing before his eyes, changed his tactics and resumed a fatherly attitude.

"My daughter," he said sadly, shaking his head and bringing his hands into play once more, "you are transgressing the Law of Israel by your persistent refusal of the many offers of marriage which have been made to you. I will gladly admit that most of them have not been worthy of your acceptance, for in addition to the great 'nadan' which you will bring to your husband, you are possessed of the beauty of the moon and of the disposition of Rebecca who met our father Isaac by the well of Nahor. But Reb Samuel is no base-born upstart, he is a prince in Israel. It is not for your wealth that he desires to be joined to you; but for the excellent report of your virtues and beauty which are known throughout all Jewry."

Miriam looked wearily at her companion and tapped her little foot, with growing impatience, on the boarded floor. Fräulein Erard clicked her needles together, keeping her eyes fixed on the even stitches. But a shadchen is never at a loss. Seeing that the rôle of "heavy father" was unacceptable to the young lady, he quickly dropped it and assumed a tone of banter. He rallied her on her spinsterhood, tried to engage Fräulein Erard in the discussion on his side, and told diverting stories of the sad ends of unmarried women to point a moral to his discourse. But finally he was compelled to take his departure defeated, for Miriam would not give him the smallest encouragement, and Fräulein Erard, who still had hopes that

Antacolski would prevail, forebore to join forces with Reb Mosche in his assault on the position.

Scenes such as these were both common and painful to Miriam. Her heart cried, "Yuri, Yuri, Yuri!" and no other name would she hear. Yet Yuri, had he lived, could never have been more to her than an unsatisfied longing; and, since he was dead, not even the renunciation of her faith could bring him back to her. And so she turned to her life's work with a sigh, and in making others happy found relief from her own griefs. The children were a never-failing source of delight to her.

"St. Dossie" was an innovation to the establishment. Hitherto no one beyond the age of twelve had been admitted as an inmate; but Miriam had not the heart to turn out into the streets the poor crazy creature whom she had rescued from the fury of the *moujiks*. Old Stephen, the gardener, looked after him; and when he had recovered from the ill-usage which he had received, Stephen found simple jobs for him to do in the garden. No one objected to the presence of the old man but Anna Paskevitch; and Miriam attributed her aversion to him to the fact that he had, in his madness, posed as a saint, a rôle which Miriam knew would be most displeasing to the "heretic" Anna. The wife of the priest never offered any other explanation of her dislike for "St. Dossie," and though she avoided him, she never again spoke to Miriam on the subject.

The Jewish community in Jelgava about this time was thrown into a state of excitement by the news that the Chief Rabbi Shapira was vacating his office and going to America, where he had been offered an

important post in New York. Rabbi Shapira had succeeded Daniel Herz as Chief Rabbi in Courland, and for ten years he had filled the position with credit. He was devoted to his people, and for a long time he had resisted the tempting offers which had been made to him from other centres of Judaism to vacate his seat in Jelgava and take up a position of greater importance elsewhere. But both his sons had emigrated to America, and when the offer came from New York, and his sons urged him to join them in the new world, Rabbi Shapira reluctantly consented.

Accordingly he announced the resignation of his seat to the people of Courland, and arranged to visit every Synagogue in the Duchy to bid farewell to the whole community.

The election of a new Rabbi is a matter of the greatest importance in Israel, for not only is he the expounder of the Law, but he is also the administrator of it; and on his judgment and impartiality depend the affairs of life, always subject to the caprice of the government of the country. Therefore the people often look for guidance in the matter to the retiring Rabbi, and it was only natural that Chief Rabbi Shapira should offer some advice on the subject to the congregations in the Synagogues throughout Courland. In this respect he was able to congratulate them, inasmuch as several men of learning and distinction were willing to come forward to fill the post of Chief Rabbi of Courland. There were, however, two men to whom he wished to call their attention, whom he considered the most worthy of all. The one was Rabbi Aaron Lasker of Berlin, and the other Rabbi Mendes Sola of Portugal. Rabbi Lasker was

an old and tried man whose fame was known throughout all Jewry. Rabbi Sola, on the other hand, had suddenly sprung to the front. Five years ago he was unknown; but now his name was spoken everywhere as the coming judge in Israel. The decision rested with them, but Rabbi Shapira hoped that they would elect one of these two men, for then he could bid them farewell with the knowledge that his place was to be filled by a better and more worthy person than himself.

Miriam Serkovski received the news of the retirement of the Chief Rabbi with a feeling of relief, for he had been uncompromisingly outspoken on the subject of marriage. He had told her that it was a sin for her to remain single, and that her good works and noble munificence counted for nothing, for "the observance of the Law outweighs all." It was the old, old formula which had always been raised as a barrier between her inclinations and her religion. The garden of her mind lay on the other side of it, whilst she, the child of centuries of tradition, walked obediently along the stony paths of the Law in all ways but one. It was the only point on which she claimed the freedom of her conscience. She would never marry, though Sinai smoked and thundered and the tables of the Law were dashed to pieces at her feet. The Law which had forbidden her to be joined to the man whom she loved, should never force her into a loveless union. Her whole nature cried out against it, and the wisdom of all the Talmudists was powerless to convince her of error.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FALL OF THE BARRIER.

"ST. DOSSIE" fell ill. Into the darkened room where he lay, no one but the doctor and Miriam ever entered. For three weeks the saint remained in a state of inoffensive lunacy, taking daily the potion which was prescribed for him, and Miriam could see no alteration in his condition. But in the fourth week there was a change. In his eyes there was no longer the wild, hunted expression, their piercing glance seemed to be concentrated, as though some fixed idea were before him. As his mind struggled to set in order the scattered images of the brain his whole bearing began to change. The shuffling gait gave place to a firm step; the bent shoulders began to straighten, and his whole personality took on an air of dignity. The room in which he was confined was kept in semi-darkness, and Miriam could not see clearly the features of her patient; but one day, when she entered the room he was sitting at the table with his head on his hands as though in deep thought, and as she closed the door he rose and spoke to her. It was the first time that he had uttered a word since the improvement in his condition began, and

the sound of his voice sent a thrill of nervous apprehension through her. The voice was familiar; but for the moment she could not recall the identity of it; she only knew that it awakened a feeling of dread and loathing.. She mastered herself and, in turn, spoke to him, enquiring how he was feeling.

"I am well," he answered—"but beyond that I can tell you nothing. I have been trying to think, but the past will not come back to me. There is nothing that I can recall but the dream—the awful dream."

He relapsed into silence once more, and Miriam for some moments did not interrupt the train of his thoughts, for she herself was trying to recall the past. But, at length, she questioned him again.

"Can you not tell me who you are, or where you come from?"

The old man shook his head.

"All that I know about myself is that I have slept a terrible sleep for years," he said, "and that I have been haunted by a dream of horror. I dreamt that I had committed every crime against God and man—that I was a thief, a perjurer, and that I had hired others to commit murder. There was, in particular, one young man whose life I had ruined because he stood between me and my desires, who haunted me more than all the other victims of my crimes. I could never find out what became of him. Sometimes I saw his dead face in the snow; but again he would appear before me living, and I could never escape from him. I went down into the grave and met him there, lying cold and dead beside me. I rose again at a false summons of the Judgment Day

—and he rose with me. Then I was taken for judgment before thirty-six men who sat at a table in a great hall. But between me and my judges stood the man whom I had wronged, interceding for me. My crimes were brought up one by one from the dead past and were heaped upon me until I came near to sinking beneath the load. When the tale of them was all told, one of the thirty-six, whose face was terrible to look upon, stood up to deliver judgment. But the man whom I had wronged pleaded for me, saying that he freely forgave me; that, though I had sworn away his life, he had found a new life in God. Then he took me by the hand and led me through valleys and clouds of fire; and evil creatures crawled out of the flames on to the path before us and spat at me. But he protected me and brought me safely through all. But when I looked at his face, it was no longer the face of the young man I had ruined. It was changed to that of an older and graver man. He laid his hand upon my forehead and the dream left me, and I fell into a quiet slumber. And it seems as though I am as yet hardly awake."

Whilst St. Theodosius was relating the torments of his dream Miriam was becoming more and more sure of the identity of the narrator. The low, even tones of the voice, the glint of the dark eyes which seemed to pierce the half-light of the room, the dignified bearing, all helped to recall to her mind the commanding personality of Zolotnikoff.

When she left the darkened room Miriam hastened to find Anna Paskevitch. The discovery which she had made accounted for Anna's strange behaviour

when she rescued the poor, mad creature from the *moujiks*. No doubt Anna had recognised him at first sight, and had striven to prevent her sheltering the man who had brought such dire disaster to her house.

"Why did you not tell me who he was?" she demanded of Anna.

"I saw that you did not recognise him," said Anna, "and I did not want to distress you by reminding you of the past. I hoped you would never find out, and that the old creature would die soon—and then you would never have known. How did you come to recognise him, child?"

"Oh, Anna! he is no longer mad. He is cured; and though he cannot remember the past nor who he is, I knew him by his voice and eyes."

"He is cured?" Anna exclaimed impatiently. "Do you mean to tell me that the fool of a doctor has cured him? What business was it of his, I should like to know? He will begin his mischief all over again. He was crazy, and he had no right to be anything else but crazy—and now this interfering fool has let him loose upon us!"

"Hush, Anna!" said Miriam with gentle reproof. "I am sure that when he remembers all the past he will be sorry and repent of his evil deeds."

Anna laughed harshly.

"Oh, yes!" she cried. "I know how it will be. First, a miserable sinner, prayer, fasting and holy water; but you may depend upon it that phase will not last long enough to ruin his health or his appetite. Then he will become a saint again—and all the saints that ever I met carry big bellies and full purses.

I never yet saw a consumptive priest, and I don't suppose the holy Zolotnikoff is likely to prove an exception."

And then another aspect of the situation presented itself to the mind of Anna Paskevitch.

"What are you going to do with him?" she demanded. "Are you going to proclaim to the world that Alexis Zolotnikoff, member of the Holy Synod, has risen from the dead and is staying in your house? I wonder what the new Chief Rabbi will say to that when he comes to Jelgava!"

"Anna, you are outrageous!" said Miriam, between wrath and laughter. "It will be time enough to think what is to be done with him when the poor man is restored to health."

"Oh! If you wait for his restoration to health he will settle the question quickly enough for himself. As soon as he remembers who he is, you and I, and a good many more in Jelgava, can pack our bags for Siberia—unless you choose the alternative which he offered you ten years ago."

"Don't be cruel, Anna, dear?" Miriam cried, covering her face with her hands.

Anna looked at her sharply. The news of Zolotnikoff's recovery had been a terrible blow to her; for with his return to reason would come retribution. For herself she cared but little; but for Nikon and her children and for Miriam it was another matter. Once more she asked herself why she had not killed him in the old powder magazine as she had intended. Then she was filled with remorse for the brutal suggestion which she had made to Miriam.

"Forgive me, dearie!" she cried, throwing her arm

round Miriam's neck. "If you only knew! If you only knew!"

But when Miriam pressed her for an explanation Anna resolutely declined to give any.

The end came ere long. Miriam was summoned to the hospital by the matron, who reported that St. Theodosius was dying.

"He was suddenly taken ill," she explained in a whisper, "and I sent for the doctor. He thinks that the recovery of his mental powers has weakened him physically, and that there is a general break-down of the system, caused by the neglect and exposure to which he has been subjected. His heart is very weak—and he may die at any moment."

Miriam dismissed the matron, and went to the bedside of the dying man. He signed to her to come nearer, and she bent over him.

"It has all come back to me," he gasped painfully. "I was the Bishop of Courland—Alexis Zolotnikoff. You know me? I thought once you cared for me—but that is long ago. You are just like the icon still—with just the same difference that there will always be. But you will forgive me, Miriam, for I have suffered terribly. The wife of the priest . . ."

His voice became inaudible, and though he struggled to finish the sentence the words were lost in the laboured breathing of the dying.

* * * * * *

The election of Rabbi Mendes Sola as Chief Rabbi of Courland had been unanimous in all the Synagogues. A letter drafted in the Holy Script had been sent to Lisbon informing him of his appointment, and

the day for his entry into Jelgava had been fixed. The greatest excitement prevailed in the Jewish community as the day drew near, for the arrival of a new Rabbi is an event of the utmost importance. The presidents and elders of the Synagogues, accompanied by all the most influential men of the community, were to go to the frontier to receive Mendes Sola and conduct him to Jelgava, where the whole Jewish population would await his arrival and accompany him to his house.

On the Sabbath after his arrival, Mendes Sola addressed the congregation in the chief Synagogue, and took as his theme the love which man owes to mankind. He appealed to his hearers to let no consideration of social or religious distinctions stand between them and their duty to their fellows, and not to repay the intolerance of others with retaliatory hatred. It was a hard doctrine to preach to a race which for centuries had been persecuted and oppressed in every quarter of the earth on account of its religion. It was a counsel of perfection. But, he told them, it was the only way to happiness. That, for himself, he would recognise no distinctions of religion since all the world were his brothers; and that he would refuse counsel to none who sought it of him.

The Chief Rabbi's inaugural address created a stir in the community; but soon his broad-minded charity became notorious throughout the town. No home was too wretched for him; no abject creature was beneath his notice. He was beloved by Jews and Gentiles alike—and many were the points in dispute which were brought for his decision. The elders

amongst the Jews, who at first had looked upon his broad views with mistrust, were unable long to resist his personality. His teaching appealed to the innate conscience of his hearers. That which he proclaimed to be right, their own hearts confirmed, without reference to tradition or dogma; for he preached the religion of Nature—the love of God and the brotherhood of man.

Miriam Serkovski had not been amongst those who assembled to welcome the new Chief Rabbi on his arrival, nor had she attended the service at the Synagogue when he gave his inaugural address. She always avoided, as far as possible, the parade of religious and social functions, preferring the quiet paths of worship and the care of her children. Though the fame of Mendes Sola was on the lips of all, she was content to wait until he chose to come to her. She knew that when he did come he would upbraid her for remaining unmarried, as Rabbi Shapira and all the shadchens in Russia had done before him. And, since she was determined not to marry, she contemplated without enthusiasm the prospect of making his acquaintance.

It was Anna Paskevitch who brought her the first news of the Chief Rabbi, three days after his arrival in Jelgava.

"These Rabbis of yours," she exclaimed irritably, "are more trouble than a wagon-load of saints! The whole town has been upside down over the arrival of this precious Mendes Sola for the last three days. They are beginning already to make a holy man of him. I hate all holy men and priests, except Nikon, and he doesn't set up to be holy."

"But our Rabbis are not priests," Miriam expostulated mildly. "They are teachers and judges in Israel."

"There's not much to choose between them, I expect," said Anna. "He'll be here soon enough. If he's as holy as they make out, he is not likely to miss the first opportunity of calling on Miriam Serkovski, the heiress He is not married yet."

In spite of Anna's prophecy, it was a month before Miriam received a note from Chief Rabbi Mendes Sola, asking for permission to visit her home for children. On this occasion he hardly spoke to Miriam, going with the matron from room to room. But when his inspection of the hospital was over, he asked if Miriam would see him alone; and Miriam took him within the house.

"My daughter," said Mendes Sola, "my duty as Chief Rabbi here compels me to interfere in the affairs of other people when it comes to my knowledge that they are transgressing the law of Israel."

Miriam knew full well what was coming; but for some reason she did not resent the rebuke of this man, as she had resented the homilies of Rabbi Shapira.

"In the whole Jewish community," the Rabbi continued, "there is no man nor woman who is doing nobler work than you, in devoting your life and wealth to the care of the helpless and destitute. But in one respect you are disobeying the law, by neglecting the obligations of your sex. No daughter of Israel is justified in setting the law of matrimony at defiance."

Miriam felt the blood rush to her cheeks as the

Rabbi brought the old charge against her; but there was no sign of impatience in her reply.

"But there is no man living whom I love, and I hold it a violation of the law to marry without love. If there is anything sacred in the bond, surely it is desecration to enter into it for convenience?"

The heart of Mendes Sola was in accord with Miriam's words. By no means would he enforce the rigid fulfilment of the letter of the law on any unwilling maiden. But it was not his purpose to drive her into a hated union; but rather to find out whether her religion were proof against love.

"There is no man living, you say," he continued, avoiding a direct reply to her question. "Then in the past there was one whom you would have wedded?"

Miriam paused before she replied. Then she said sadly:

"No—I could never have wedded him. It was a long time ago. Our people in Jelgava were being persecuted. He tried to save us—in fact it was through him that the massacre was stayed, though my father and the Chief Rabbi were killed. He saved me from a terrible fate," said Miriam, burying her face in her hands, "and I loved him for all that he had done—and for himself. He was arrested for the part which he took in defending us, because he killed a man who laid hands upon me. He was sent to Siberia, but he died on the road. That was ten years ago. When he died my heart died with him, and though I could never have married him because he was not of our people, yet I resolved to be true to his memory. In the next world there may be other laws which will not make it impossible for Jew and Christian to unite.

I like to think that it will be so, and that when I meet him again there will be nothing to come between us."

When Miriam finished her confession there were tears in her eyes, and Mendes Sola turned away from her without making any comment on it. Yet, though a constrained silence prevailed, there passed between them a current of sympathy which needed no words. The Rabbi was standing by the window, and his eyes were turned towards the garden without, where autumn flowers and leaves with mellow tints hinted that summer was past. Almost unconsciously Miriam drew near to him, and touching his arm whispered:

"Tell me that I have not sinned greatly in loving him."

With his eyes still fixed on the autumn flowers he answered her:

"My daughter, if it should be that the man whom you speak of were not dead, and that he were to return to you, what would your choice be?"

"God knows I love him with my whole heart," Miriam exclaimed passionately, "yet I love the God of my fathers more. If it were a sin in His sight to receive my lover, I would send him away from me—to wait until the barrier is removed."

Rabbi Mendes Sola still looked out of the window, and on his face was an expression of great happiness. He ran his fingers through his long hair, throwing it back from his brows. Then he took from his inner pocket a flat leather case, and, without turning, held it out to Miriam.

"By what that contains," he said in an altered voice, "you may know that your lover still lives."

Miriam almost snatched it from him, and opening the case let fall a crumpled bit of lace and a few fragments of dried rose leaves. She dropped on her knees to gather up the precious relics, and when she looked up again, Mendes Sola was bending over her. For a moment she gazed into his face speechless. Then she seized his hands in hers and carried them to her lips, crying:

"Yuri! My Yuri!"

THE END.

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